

EXTENSION: TOWARDS A GENEALOGICAL ACCOUNTABILITY
(THE CRITICAL [E] RACE [ING] OF MAD JEWISH IDENTITY)

by

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Abstract:

Can we be accountable to privilege? Can we find a space for coherent anti-racist secular Ashkenazi Jewish identity in North America, where Jews have been deeply implicated in structural violence? Can we be agents of both complicity and change? This auto-ethnography describes a haunting; focusing on the ghostly presences of my deceased uncle Larry Treiman and Bruno Bettelheim, child psychologist and director of the residential treatment facility where Larry was institutionalized as a child, it creates a deeply personal explanation for how the whitening of Ashkenazi North American Jewish identity, the shifts in discourses of madness and major sociological and economic change in Chicago and New York over the second half of the 20th century constituted my subjectivity and my privilege. This text proposes *accountability through genealogy*, teasing out the possibility for ethical thought and action through cultivating a deeply personal relationship to the ghosts that make us.

Acknowledgements

Dearest nearly-everyone: I've been singing your praises to oncoming traffic for months now. I have myself convinced that the gravity and depth of my thanks has already been shouted into the world – it is, right now, becoming blunted and easier to digest for all the sound-wave bouncing above Toronto din. And that's not poetry, friends; it's cold hard fact. I sing to myself on my bike. I've been writing these acknowledgements aloud, in tune, for months.

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This text is something of an offering. First and foremost, I wrote it for my mother and her brother and sister. It is about them, after all. My mom and Trudy have encouraged me, supported me, and graciously subjected themselves to interviews and prying questions, phone calls and emails. Thanks for that.

It is also for my friends. Sometimes, I think I wrote all of this just to explain myself to them. Funny thing is, it also would've been impossible without their constant support, insight, conversation, challenge, home cooking. In Toronto, Guelph, Montréal, New York (both upstate and “The City”), Binghamton, Seattle and Berlin, they've been cheering me on, challenging me, listening patiently to my fears and providing crucial insights. They made this project possible. Of particular relevance to this project have been the residents of Shanly Street, folks I met at OISE, the rotating cast of characters at Arlington, and the kids still kicking around Guelph making glorious noise with guitars and voices, in kitchens and backyards.

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EXTENDING WHERE WE THINK WE ARE

Chapter One: Introduction

Casper and Me

We are not only constituted by our relations but dispossessed by them as well.

-Judith Butler, Precarious Life.

Death is the mystery at the heart of life, and the text and writing has an 'intense relation' to survival. -Susanne Gannon, "The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self-Writing: French Poststructural Theory and Autoethnography."

This is not a project of healing.

Don't get me wrong: I don't begrudge anyone their healing. It is simply not my interest.

Not here, anyway. And, though I will be making tiny, ambivalent memorials to death, it is not an act of eulogy. Nor, for the record, is it a search for wholeness or peace. Just in case you were wondering.

This is, however, a project of recovery. They are different, healing and recovery. I am interested in *dredging up*, in pulling things from the wreckage. I am not interesting in finding answers, but in becoming answerable. *To whom are we accountable?*

I am looking for the space in myself for a chorus; I am seeking fracture and multiplicity. I want to be made *many*, as this is a project of haunting.

Haunting is a sort of survival. Haunting is a way of making intentional the living present. Haunting is a gift.

From campfire stories to post-colonial theories of trauma, we associate the ghostly with the unwanted; ghosts emerge from pain, linger on to take care of unfinished business. *Isn't there something I was supposed to do here?* For the purposes of this project, I prefer to think of haunting as a way of living – but living with the electric crackle of an expansive memory; living with the knowledge that we are repeating and remaking the past with each breath.

Seeking to be haunted, as I am, means developing a new attitude towards my present life.

I wonder: might I discover some of what I have been repeating? Might I find a space to understand my own agency in the making of my identity?

For quite a few years now, I have identified as a “radical.” Some might say “leftist.” Regardless, I “have politics.” I have identified as a “post-structural anarchist,” an “ally” to people in more marginalized positions than myself, or folks engaged in social struggle. I'm interested in taking myself to task – in figuring out what I might mean by all of this.

I hear a lot of talk about accountability. As a radical, a leftist and, most of all, as a self-proclaimed ally, I intend to be accountable – to my identity, to my privilege, to those around me. I want to lift the corners of this rhetoric, see what's underneath. What am I really talking about?

I am looking to take the charge of accountability seriously. I am looking to make myself accountable to the world through my hauntings. I am looking to become accountable to my hauntings through my life in the world. This is a project of ethics and agency.

When I talk about haunting, I am interested in conjuring some specific ghosts – my uncle Larry, for instance, who died in 2008 or the director of Chicago's Orthogenic School, Bruno Bettelheim, who died in 1991. These ghosts are literal (or as literal as ghosts can be): they are dead people whose stories have stayed with me, people whose lives and deaths impacted mine. These are not, however, the only ghosts in this text. There are others, ones that were never human; incorporeal realities that we live with, in, and through every day – narratives, discourses, technologies, myths and stories that shape our ways of talking, thinking and behaving. These ghosts are alive and kicking everywhere, all the time.

Of course, the lines don't get drawn quite so clearly. Narratives, myths and stories are always *peopled*; individuals and their concrete actions are both shaped by and create or reinforce the ghostly discourses that circulate and, in circulating, help to make more people, and their actions, possible. Actions and narratives, the dead and the living, structures and sites all coexist

simultaneously to create the muddy in/corporeal world in which we become and are always becoming human.

We have something to answer for. My particular instance of humanity – the one that speaks this “I” - is a site of extreme privilege. I was interpellated into this world – born and, simultaneously, spoken into existence - as a white American citizen from a culture producing, upper-income-bracket family in New York City. I have the identity of “the” oppressor. I also have done some things that are oppressive, both consciously and unconsciously, as a result of my identity. As a queer person who has been psychiatrized – albeit in mostly non-coercive and/or non-violent ways – the marginality that I have experienced has always been experienced in this landscape of privilege. Sometimes, I feel oppressed. Sometimes, I am. I am a node in a nexus of power, a person on a globe.

Let me be “straight”: I am looking for belonging. There is one aspect of my identity – itself a ghost of sorts – that I have not been able to shake, that has told me that I *belong to it* whether or not I feel like it *belongs to me*. I am a Jew. For years, I refused it. That very refusal, I now believe, is an integral part of *belonging to it*. The story of Jewish identity has been influential in the story of subjectivity; it is a crucial site for my thoughts on privilege and marginality. I have a sneaking suspicion that thinking through accountability is linked to thinking through my Jewish identity.

Jewish identity is my no/thing. *If we're not a nation, and we're not a race...if we're not even a religious group...what makes us what we are?* North American secular Ashkenazi Jewish identity explains its existence through a story of haunting - we are followed by the ghosts of our displaced, ghettoized and murdered relatives and ancestors. We are indebted to the Jews who came before us.

When I talk about Jewishness, I mean to call upon a specific, racist, demographically

bounded discourse that ties the unqualified identity “Jew” with the global north, relative secularism and whiteness. I do not condone the racist writing-out of Jews of color - Sephardic North African, Spanish and Portuguese Jews, Arab Jews, Jews from the geopolitical region politically deemed “the middle east” (but not Israel, as “Israeli Jews” are, too, narratively married to white North American Ashkenazi identities, a crucial technology of the racist genocidal colonial project of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands). “Jew” is also not used colloquially to describe Hasids, or other Jews whose physical appearance deviates greatly from the North America “norm” as a result of their Jewish identification - these people must be qualified, noted as “Hasidic” or “Lubavitcher” Jews. I think the writing-out of non-white and deeply religious Jews indicates a profound attempt towards the normalization of Jewish identity. Perhaps this is why Jewishness is a place of belonging – it is categorically ambivalent in my life, the comfortable uncomfortable. It is both privilege and (remembered) marginality.

This configuration of Jewishness – the “Jew” who is North American white middle-class secularism – not only implicates me, it *is* me. So, when I speak of haunted Jews – *Jews like me* – I am using a discursive trope that I do not trust, but that has been crucial nonetheless to my self-definition.

This is how we are haunted. My version of secular North American Ashkenazi Jewishness was stripped to its barest component part: memory. *What makes me a Jew is only this haunting.* Leave religion, leave tradition, leave “ethnicity” - my one Jewish charge was *never forget*. The dispossession of land and lives, anti-Semitism, the Nazi Holocaust (*especially* the Nazi Holocaust): it was this memory that kept us Jewish. When I renounced Judaism at fourteen, weeks after my rush-job Bat Mitzvah, my mother's devastation did not arise from my refusal of God, but a refusal to raise my hypothetical kids with the ghostly memory.

When I think about my identity – my hauntings – Jewishness seems the crux because of

its very hauntedness. Thus far, in my life, I've seen this hauntedness manifest in dangerous, sometimes genocidal ways – *never forget* becomes justification for the occupation of Palestinian lands and the murder of Palestinian children, the specter of anti-Semitism becomes paranoiac justification for deeply inward-focused interest groups and an incapacity to build coalitions with others. This doesn't, however, have to be the way.

I want to make space for a new kind of Jewish haunting, one where we learn to live accountable to ghosts of our ancestors, real and imagined, just as we become accountable to the ghosts of the Palestinians that we have murdered and dispossessed, the First Nations people that we are now implicated in oppressing with our newfound white settler identities. I want to locate myself on a landscape of privilege and marginality so that I might better know myself and the people around me.

This project is an attempt to become an ally by looking radically inwards – by looking at the people, stories and structures that made me. It will likely fail. “Becoming an ally,” “becoming haunted” or “becoming accountable” refers to an attitudinal process rather than a goal, and this project is merely a beginning – a preliminary gesture, the attempt to lay the groundwork for a theoretical process that requires living every day with the interplay and mutual constitution of privilege and marginality in precise, specific, personal ways. It is an attempt to recover who I am so that I might, someday, be better to others. Perhaps I am longing to belong as an ally.

As much of this project is about Jewish identity, race and madness, in writing it I might accidentally clear a discursive space for Jewish identity in critical race theory, or for queerness in mad/disability studies. That would be a fortunate side effect of what is ultimately a profoundly narcissistic project – narcissistic in the Derridean sense, wherein a text can engage in a self-analysis that is “open to the experience of the other as other.” (Derrida 1995, 199) Derrida writes, “I believe that without a movement of narcissistic reappropriation, the relation to the other would

be absolutely destroyed” (ibid). I am looking to make haunting a project of living, as I am looking to make genealogy a project of accountability. And always, always, I am writing about myself. I hope to produce what Gregoriou calls

A writing indebted to the other; writing as the effect of a vulnerability to the other; vulnerability as the impossibility of escaping the responsibility *to* and *for* the other because the other already creates and recreates my body through repeated inscriptions: events of birth, circumcision, sickness, loss, death and mourning (1995, 314)

If only it were that easy. This project of writing about myself *towards* accountability is risky writing indeed. It requires vulnerability, care and carefulness. However, it is also suspect writing.

I am undoubtedly trying to become better. I am wary of the project of “betterment,” as it, too, has a history. I want to both trouble *and* retain the ethical imperative that equates self knowledge with self control (as in, control both *by the self of its own content* and *through the self of the world and its interpretation*, which differs dramatically from *self control as self restraint*, often colloquially implied) and the progress narrative of personal development (*I become 'better' through 'knowing myself'*). That is, I want to acknowledge that 'self control' and 'personal development' are Christian colonial capitalist constructs that assume both the tangibility of The Self and the possibility/desirability of a progression towards “wholeness” or “betterment” through (self) “work.” In contextualizing these narratives as constructs of the logic(s) of modern oppression, their power and legitimacy are undermined. This is good and necessary; they are narratives that murder. However, I am still promoting self-control and “work,” promoting the “betterment” of myself through learning and becoming accountable to my history. I will have to live with this tension, this discomfort, this haunting.

I do not want this project to end cleanly. However, I am wary also of too much mess. I am already leaky, and only getting leakier. In making myself ever more entangled, I must take care to never offer mess itself as a sort of utopian vision or as a sign of completion, of

accountability achieved. *Showing you I know my history doesn't make me less responsible for the present. Showing you that I, too, am messy doesn't help to clean up the mess that I have made.*

Sometimes, I fear my urge to explain myself is a guilt-compulsion towards confession, wherein even talking about my privilege displays and reinforces it.

In her essay “Declarations of Whiteness: the Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism,” Sara Ahmed notes the various ways in which white folks make professions/admissions of their complicity in racist violence to reinscribe their inherent value, worth and supremacy. She writes,

The paradoxes of admitting to one's own racism are clear: saying 'we are racist' becomes a claim to have overcome the conditions (unseen racism) that require the speech act in the first place. The logic goes: we say, 'we are racist', and insofar as we can admit to being racist (and racists are unwitting), then we are showing that 'we are not racist', or at least that we are not racist in the same way.' (2004, 7)

What she so astutely points to as “non-performative declarations of anti-racism” might be applied to other statements that brashly assume to be doing the work they purport, such as “talking about myself is a means of accountability,” or “I can make an intervention into privilege by saying I can make an intervention into privilege.” The world is not words alone. In the end, I fear that the act of situating myself in speech tacitly reinscribes dominant discourses of power; if power – at least linguistically – is maintained through the separation of the world into explicable and non-explicable/legible and illegible bodies and identities, then perhaps the project of becoming ever more explicable helps to maintain legitimated authority.

Masters Tools, Masters House, Masters Thesis

My hauntings, these confessions of them, my fear of the confession, this writing I am producing to address my fears of the confessions of the haunting – every element of this project and the subjectivity it addresses (mine) is *schooled*. That is, I notice many of the things I propose as “radical,” “political” or “accountable” as products of my schooling. This, of course, is scary – I know the investments of schools.

Though there are many ways to conceptually frame “schooling,” I should note, here, that for the purposes of this project, when I say “schools” I mean to the institutional or government-sponsored sites of “education,” called such. That is: when I say this project is *schooled*, I mean that it is a response to and manifestation of discourses that circulate in and amongst schools – elementary schools, high schools, universities. In this case – mine – I also refer to my home-space, at certain temporal sites, as “schooled.” I would argue that the consistent promotion in my household of explicitly self-reflexive “educational” activities (common to white upper-middle-class urban North American baby-boomer parents of the 1980s) made my home a sometime-annexation of both The School (in general) and my school (in particular). I was born a project of others; I have become a project of myself. Along the way, I have been a project of schools.

I am writing this “I am.” The notion of “authorship” (linguistically) is key to delimiting the particular kind of schooled identity at stake in this project. Due to an inherently ableist/euro-centric/non-immigrant centric notion of the relation of learning to language development to subject formation (*learning to be a subject through learning to speak and write*), the virtues of legibility through language-use were impressed upon me at a young age. A potent mix of familial and cultural anxieties about the precariousness of my (very clear) privilege and my own desire to be *understood and understandable* led to my compulsion towards a self-narration is simultaneously designed to intervene on dominant discourses and prove my legibility within them. *I know how to speak well about knowing how to speak well.* I hazard that this emerges from generations of ambivalent Jewish desires towards both assimilation through the schooling project and particularity within it. Much of my academic self-narration is merely a continuation of the North American post-war middle class Ashkenazi Jewish desire to both assimilate into socially-sanctioned whiteness through university education and professionalization and simultaneously maintain select or elite status as somehow “inherently intellectual” due to “ethnicity.”

In many ways, this project is an attempt to situate my investment in talking – writing – through talking – writing – about it. In talking – writing – about it, I am attempting to decipher its (partial) origin, my (partial) origin.

I'm doing just what has always been planned for me. I have always been encouraged to talk. I grew up in the shadow of The Word. Not The Word of God, but The Word Alone; in a household of journalists and lapsed Jews, we white New Yorkers had infinite verbiage and grammar, and made our world out of what could be spoken. As far as I could tell from watching my television producer parents, there was no truth – just ways of speaking.

My mother named me Griffin because she expected I would be a writer, and she wanted my words to be genderless, so that people might “really listen.” My mother has always offered to “copy edit” anything I've written, from the earliest scratching to my middle-school book reports. This process usually involved sitting down with her as she made nodes in code. “This sentence is awkward – can you tell me why?” she would ask. I learned (and later, intentionally unlearned – or thought I did) to speak properly by way of red pen and leading questions. My parents spoke the “standard” (white, Northeastern, “educated”) English of broadcast television; my high-price elementary school taught me that the most important thing was to speak well, and often. All of these things arrived from the very domination and oppression of white, “proper,” English-speaking and, I would argue, Christian culture that are stitched into my bones.

If we are to be accountable, we must look clearly at ourselves. I learned to write through oppressive technologies; now I write to bring those technologies into the conversation. *There is no way to look clearly at ourselves.* I write to find myself. Are these the master's tools? Is this the master's house?

But let's get back to ghosts. In the midst of all this lofty abstraction, I am actually

concerned with the precise. I am looking for one very specific ghost. I hope that speaking him into my present might make room for the infinite hauntings of accountability.

This project began with the death of my uncle, my mother's brother. Larry Treiman died in the winter of 2008. He was nearly fifty years old and lived in a bachelor apartment in Chicago, amidst boxes of belongings and ever-multiplying diagnoses. Whether attributed to the effects of madness, a hostile environment, or a degenerative liver disease, even determining the so-called factual circumstances surrounding Larry's death require unwinding the Latinate knot of psychiatry and stigma that his body carried, the battery of ways in which biomedical discourses marked him as deviant and prescribed impossible cures.

I was at home by accident the day they found Larry's body - if the friends I was staying with in upstate New York didn't have cats / if I hadn't been driving down to North Carolina / if – I wouldn't have been around when my mother got the phone call. Trudy Treiman, my aunt, two and a half years younger than my mom, had just gotten off the phone with a social worker. Or else it might've been a cop. Otherwise, a hospital employee. The facts get lost and turned around; bureaucracy falters in its capacity to order the world and our memory of it in moments of crisis.

I was on tour, playing concerts down the east coast, headed south, when she got the phone call, but I got into her car going the other direction. My mom, her beagle Fred and I made a panicked drive to Binghamton to retrieve Andrew, my brother, and then the long haul overnight to Chicago, punctuated only by a frantic motel check-in, a breakfast-less morning. In Chicago, Andrew and I watched, listened, dealt with logistics. We tried to invent new rituals for grieving, but found we had surprisingly little to go on.

Of the many stories I have of Larry – remembered encounters, letters and trips to the planetarium – the only one I'm sure is *mine* is that of his death. Then again, I am not sure that

anything is *mine* – seeking my identity requires a genealogy that positions me as neither fully the author nor fully the script of myself, but rather a witness to my own constant making and re-making.

In Precarious Life, Judith Butler writes

What grief displays, in contrast, is the thrall in which our relations with others hold us, in ways that we cannot always recount or explain, in ways that often interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide, in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control. I might try to tell a story here about what I am feeling, but it would have to be a story in which the very "I" who seeks to tell the story is stopped in the midst of the telling; the very "I" is called into question by its relation to the Other, a relation that does not precisely reduce me to speechlessness, but does nevertheless clutter my speech with signs of its undoing. (2004, 23)

In dealing with Larry's death, my family emerged entangled, wrought with signs of our own undoing. It was in our search for traditions – from our Internet printout of the Kaddish to the uncanny landscape of now-gentrifying neighborhoods in Chicago, we tried to turn towards the familiar, but found ourselves, in all our urbanity, at a loss –that I began to call my very “I” into the kind of speechless question that Butler see(k)s in grief. At our service, my grandmother kept repeating Larry's university degrees like they might deliver us *from* something, *towards* something else. The more I explore it, though, the less Treiman-specific it seems. Maybe it's a Jewish thing. Then again, maybe saying “it's a Jewish thing” is a Jewish thing. *Maybe allowing Jewishness to emerge in the question of whether or not it is Jewish to question Jewishness is a Jewish thing.*

After Larry's death, my mother began to repeat a strange personal adage that has become the foundation for this current search for accountability. “You and Andrew – you're Larry's legacy.” I am concerned with this idea; concerned with entering the tangle of personal accountability, political identity and ethical praxis that might emerge at the interstices between “legacy” and “identity.” I am concerned, too, with how the event of Larry's death made articulate the already-implicitly-present mandate towards greatness that my mother's insistent love and

profound desire for “brilliant” children created. I am concerned with how Jewish this all seems, just as I am concerned with how easy it seems for me to claim all of this *all of this* as somehow uniquely Jewish.

In his “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Walter Benjamin writes:

There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. (1969, 254)

In some cultural understandings, I am the first “truly white” child in my family; rather, the first child for whom Jewishness is a truly bracketed, invisible identity (though, in many of my mother’s accounts, we had family members, including herself, who often “passed” as Christians in their Catholic neighborhood in Chicago). I am also the first family member in whom queerness and madness – simultaneously/alternately jarringly apparent and completely subsumed in my presentation, self-representation and bureaucratic status in the world – was not treated as a mark of degeneracy requiring a socially mandated “cure” but, instead, a fairly acceptable mark of culture-producing, high-income, “ethnic” Jewish intelligence and creativity.

When Larry died, the Treiman name – an Ellis Island invention, we think, transmissible only through heterosexual procreation, but, unlike Jewishness, passed patrilineally – died with him; the legacy, however, of “genius” continued on, finally spoken, in the bodies and lives of my brother and I. Thus, the “weak Messianic power” that Andrew and I (both Epsteins, from my father’s side) were already endowed with became articulated as a sort of mandate-towards-cultural-production in the name of family memory.

This project is not an attempt to “settle the claim,” as Benjamin would have it, of personal legacy. *Debts are debts; some are never settled.* Rather, it is an attempt to explore it (and, perhaps, explode it), by seeking personal history as a new way of constituting concepts of

accountability. It is a gesture towards what Sara Ahmed calls our “missing sides,” that which exists *behind* our perceptions of ourselves, of objects and of space. She writes, “what is behind the object for me is not only its missing side, but also its historicity, the conditions of its arrival” (2006, 549). *Maybe we are all better unsettled*. I am looking for the conditions of my arrival. I am looking to make the conditions of my arrival presently relevant in my daily speech, my daily practice. *May I become more haunted*.

There is a space in me for Larry's story, and in Larry's story for the many stories of the whitening and de-pathologizing of Jewish identity. In encountering Larry's death, I began to notice resonance between my life and his. These similarities, these echoes point to and emerge from specific and different historical circumstances of our two lives. I believe that the oppression and violence that Larry faced as a subject of bio-medical governance actually provided the grounds of possibility for my subjectivity, my relative lack of bio-medical intervention. I believe that in Larry's marginality, I might find some history of my privilege.

Larry and I have both been cited by friends and family members, as “highly sensitive,” “intellectual,” “strongly ideological,” “stubborn,” and “crazy.” Further, Larry and I were both psychiatrized at young ages. We were both subjected to extensive testing, and found to be “gifted.” We were also both queered in our gender expressions, in our bodies. We were both expected to be one thing, and came out another. However, our projected life chances and the outcome, thus far, of our life paths differ(ed) greatly.

Whereas Larry was incarcerated in a psychiatric facility at a young age, I was coddled and supported. The shift in the class status and whiteness of secular Ashkenazi Jewish identity as it is received and configured in the United States accounts, at least in part, for this incredible differentiation. Larry's behavior, intellectual commitments and appearance rendered him illegible in dominant discursive structures. This illegibility was called madness, and mitigated by

diagnoses - “Obsessive Compulsive,” “paranoid,” etc. Even diagnoses, however, were not powerful enough to deliver him into legibility – in the stories my family tells, Larry was “not crazy enough” to hospitalize, “too crazy” to live on his own. Despite two Masters degrees and stellar student-teaching recommendations, Larry was rarely employed. As far as I know, he never held a job after leaving his PhD program. He tried and tried, but was rejected at every turn. Larry's ideological commitments – strict veganism, strong socialist sentiment – were rarely, if ever, respected by people in clinical support positions. Rather, they were seen as further proof that he was “crazy.” His eschewal of sexual and procreative models of personal contact, and his physical appearance as “effeminate” queered his received gender and orientation, if not outright, then in the quiet whispers of my family life, in the utter shock on my mother's face when she recounts to me how she learned that Larry had a secret sometime-girlfriend. “We never knew!”

No one knew what to do with Larry. In a world where social services are strictly controlled and meted out on the basis of comprehensible and “authentic” subject positions – in a world where love and group-belonging are linked – Larry's identity was not comprehensible

Love, authenticity, belonging – they're all historical. Over the course of Larry's life, major changes occurred in the ways in which Jewishness and psychiatrization were received. Many white Jews were given the opportunity to assimilate, and the bio-medical discourse moved from built carceral sites (psychiatric institutions) to embodied carceral sites through the introduction of psycho-pharmaceuticals. The psycho-pharmaceutical industry, an increasingly lucrative market, had (and still has) at least the partial de-stigmatization of mental illness in its best interests. Similarly, over Larry's lifetime, Ashkenazi Jews in North America became increasingly upwardly mobile, and the stigma of the mad Jew changed profoundly. As these processes occurred, offering Larry more options to join white-stream, managed normalcy, he was further pathologized due to his refusal to assimilate. Out of certain ideological and personal convictions, Larry never took

psychiatric drugs and never sought white-collar employment. Larry refused assimilation. His refusal just made him madder – that is, *more mad*.

A lot of the difference between Larry and I lies in our access to choice – while we both made/make choices, mine are respected and understood more than his ever were. In fact, some of the choices that made Larry's body appear incomprehensibly mad are the same that make me appear sane. Having been pathologized throughout his life, Larry's words, intellectual work and ideological commitments were never trusted outside of select classroom settings. He didn't have an identity group, a friendship group, advocates that he could trust. My words, work and ideology – just as paranoid, just as urgent – have been trusted in most, though not all, places. Wherever I am not given respect, I can find friends, advocates, others to support me. Madness seems to slide right off of me unless I want it to stick. I am so very explicable, most of the time.

By the time I was born into a secular, Manhattan family, Jewishness had become folded into dominant discourses of whiteness. The madness of Jews still remains in marrow-traces, but it has been straightened to look right, to look white. “Neurosis” and “hysteria” are still linked to Jewish identity in essentializing ways, but they have become palatable eccentricities in the public eye, so long as they manifest quietly in the lives of white secular people through stand-up comedy, television or writing.

I was born to two journalists-cum-television-producers. My parents worked for major television networks in New York City for most of my early childhood. My first experiences with educational settings and psychiatry resemble Larry's, in some way; I was called “sensitive,” “intense,” and “smart,” was subjected to early psychological testing and therapy. Sure, I was an insomniac, with incredible energy, wild joy and terrible anger. Sure, I was called “emotionally disturbed” by my kindergarten teacher. Sure, like Larry, I went to a special school. “Special” for me, however, differed profoundly from “special” for Larry. My school was dedicated to a

pluralist multiculturalism, purporting to promote ethical thought to the “gifted” or “bright” children who attended. It shaped us intentionally into the intellectual culture producers that we were expected to be. Its mission was to encourage us to express our individuality – even our hypersensitivity – and to always call it creativity, never madness. That is, so long as we made it to college.

I grew up with an incredible amount of support. Despite my behavioral differences, and a number of psychiatric diagnoses in my adolescent years (depression, anorexia, body dysmorphic disorder), I was consistently told that I was merely “unique,” “creative,” “sensitive.” Maybe, my mothers still posits, I was just “too smart.”

It was normal, where I grew up, to carry a couple of psychiatric diagnoses. It was normal to have a therapist, even to take prescribed anti-depressants – after all, what kid from the Upper West Side of Manhattan, grown of the raucous of concrete and caged trees, wasn't a little “crazy”? I was told I was precocious, smart, and even, perhaps, a feminist; my queerness in High School (then “bisexuality,” or, as I explained it, “identification with gay men”) was encouraged and accepted. I was explicable; I was a smart, urban, privileged white person – with a touch of Jewish socialism! - rather than a paranoid or psychotic Jew. The process of becoming explicable had a deep impact on many. In fact, Larry was, in some ways, a casualty of it. His ghost is one I need to learn to live with fully if there is to be any space for accountable identity.

The Conditions of Our Arrival

So: it's about agency and accountability; about Jewish identity, race and madness; it's about Larry and me – perhaps it is best to think of this project as a case study in case studies. I am going to attempt to make my family legible as a site for thinking about accountability; I am going to attempt to write a genealogy of myself. To make it more manageable, I have divided it into

broad theoretical sections. These sections are called “EXTENSIONS,” and they each begin with the word “Extending.” To make things a little more complicated – or, actually, a little more linear – I have also divided the text up into chapters. Some “EXTENSIONS” contain only one chapter – others, two or three. All of the text is meant to resonate with all of the other text. These extensions can be encountered as discrete objects, but they must always share the same space. It is my hope that a dense theory of accountable multiplicity might emerge in the space between them, but that's really up to you. Certainly, they do not amount to a single, linear argument, and should therefore not be read as such. *If they fail, may they fail spectacularly.*

Each “EXTENSION” deals with a broad theoretical haunting. Each chapter deals with a specific manifestation of that haunting. The first “EXTENSION” - “Extending Where We Think We Are” is this introduction. It intends to lay out the project – to point to where we (I) think we might start. You're already in it.

The second “EXTENSION” - “Extending The Li(v)es of Others” introduces the theoretical groundwork for the rest of this project. It contains a single chapter, “Coming Down With a Case of Whiteness.” It is a literature review structured as a case-study. To explore the theories crucial to understanding the whitening of Jewish identity and the racialization of madness, I tell the story of a ghost – Bruno Bettelheim, the director of the Orthogenic School where Larry was institutionalized as a child.

Bruno Bettelheim was acted upon by shifting discourses of power at a time that was crucial for the whitening of Jewish identity. Through his rehabilitative “educational” practice, he helped to script the kinds of drastic changes that occurred in the racialization of madness and the queering of Jewish identity. In exploring Bettelheim's life as a case study for the whitening and de-pathologizing of Jewish identity, I hope to set the theoretical tone for this project. Bettelheim's personal identity as a Jew, an immigrant and a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps – and, of

course, his direct involvement with Larry's life - make him a uniquely appropriate character to show how the history of racist, ableist and heteropatriarchal educational and medical logics influenced modern North American Jewishness. Bruno Bettelheim and his Orthogenic School were committed to a tacitly eugenic project that had tangible effects both on the place of Jewish identity in a discourse of radicalized madness and on Larry's particular life.

As will become clear in the section on Bettelheim, this project is deeply indebted to disability studies, critical race theory and Jewish cultural studies. Through engaging with Bettelheim's life in a way that uses theories of madness and psychiatrization through the lens of disability studies, I propose "disability" as a broad coalition-building term, and "disability studies" as a good starting point for the theoretical praxis of intersectional analysis. Further, I make a case for the introduction of Jewish cultural studies – still a burgeoning field of critique – into critical race theory. The relatively recent whitening of Jewish identity in North America makes Jewishness a fascinating, if terrifying, case study in itself for the ways in which the scramble towardsin this particular circumstance, I look at the Orthogenic School as both structured by and s whiteness – inherently tied to performances of ableist heteropatriarchal Christian norms – functions to deepen the marginalization of other Others.

Through the example of Bettelheim, I argue that the climb into whiteness for the Jews was a *schooled* project – that is, it was both enacted through the site of the school (and, specifically in this project, Bettelheim's Orthogenic School) and that it had a *curriculum*. In this context, I take "curriculum" to mean a set of legitimated knowledges transmitted in structured ways and in select places – in this particular circumstance, I look at The Orthogenic School as both structured by and instrumental in structuring a broader racist and ableist North American curriculum.

The third "EXTENSION" - "Extending Our Li(v)es As If They Were Our Own" - is the

longest and densest of the theoretical sections. It deals with the stories that my family tells. This “EXTENSION” is broken into three separate chapters which are meant to speak to each other.

“What We Have Come to Know,” the first chapter in this “EXTENSION,” functions as an introduction both to my family and to the practice of storytelling as a way of encountering history. It endeavors to tell multiple stories of Larry's life, first through my words and then through the words of my family.

A large part of “What We Have Come to Know” is straight narrative – I make liberal use of long quotations from interviews that I conducted with my aunt, grandmother and mother, attempting to make as few analytic comments as possible. I think it is crucial to give my family space to speak *on their own terms* (as much as this is possible in a project of my making). While the stories they tell lay the groundwork for my identity, they are not *mine*; the stories of my mother's childhood, of my grandmother's marriage, of my aunt's career and of all of their memories of Larry are *theirs* and deserve to be told in their language as much as is possible. This is especially true, I think, given that I spend the rest of this “EXTENSION” attempting to unpack these stories in the context of my life. They should have their say first, as I will inevitably get the last word.

The next chapter, “Madness and the Mensch,” explores how madness and Jewish identity are made and remembered by my family by attempting to enter the different stories that my aunt, grandmother and mother all tell of my grandfather, Oscar. It is my belief that the stories they tell of Oscar's “tragic life,” his institutionalization and his fatherly love are inflected by then-current narratives of proper masculinity and Jewish identity. Further, still, I feel that the way that they remember Oscar says a great deal about how they think about Larry. In this chapter, I use both direct interview quotation and New Jewish Cultural Studies texts to think through how we configure the social contracts of madness and sanity, because I am sure that these have relevance

to Larry's identity and, in turn, to mine.

The final chapter of this “EXTENSION” - “Critical Race/Erasure” – looks at the lives of my family members a crucial historical juncture – 1968. The mythological significance of this year, both in my family and in sociopolitical narratives, is profound. A number of crucial events – Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, blockbusting on Chicago's South Side, my grandfather's institutionalization in the psychiatric ward of the Veteran's Hospital – aligned, throwing my family's racial/Jewish identity into sharp relief. I believe that in 1968, my family members came to understand themselves as white, perhaps for the first time. I cite this as a crucial moment not only for my family, but for the narrative of Jewish whiteness at large. This historical moment, and its ambivalent memory, laid the foundation for my own experience of whiteness.

The final theoretical section of this project is entitled “(Over)-Extended: Laying/Living With the Enemy.” It contains two chapters. The first, “All my Ghosts” is as close to “straight” auto-ethnography as this project comes. It is an attempt to write a history of my identity through the lens of my whiteness, my queerness, my Jewishness, my madness and my participation in the schooling project. In it, I posit my subjectivity – and my desire to explain the history of that subjectivity – as a logical result of the historical processes of whitening that occurred to my family over the last fifty years or so. However, it also attempts to take up questions of accountability, such as: how is writing a history of yourself actually a deflection of agency? Is there a way to reconcile autonomy, history and subjectivity? How can we become accountable? Taking a cue from Stacy Holman Jones’ notion that “autoethnography works to hold the self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis” (2004, 764), it is an exploration of textual disequilibrium, “disruptive [and] poststructural” (Gannon 2006, 477).

The final chapter of this project, “Conclusion or Bless Me Anyway” attempts, and fails, to answer those questions. It fails as a conclusion in that it fails to draw conclusions. It simply

endeavors to become better haunted. Perhaps it fails at that, too.

As you'll surely notice, this project is a patchwork of personal narrative, historical research and close readings of the strange stories we whisper to each other through the generations, or speak awkwardly into hand-held tape recorders. The research for this project was aided by a great willingness on the part of my family to participate – that is, to talk to me about tough and complicated things, knowing full well that they would be interpreted and framed by my loving but harshly critical and sometimes unforgiving eye. Their very willingness is both profoundly heartening – *this is how it feels to be taken seriously, to be heard or perhaps all this talking might do us some good* – and charges the project with the kinetic energy of my fried nerves and the terror of expectation – *maybe they won't like what they read here. Maybe I'm not giving them what they wanted or needed from me. Maybe I owe everyone something more.*

I am attempting to write a contextualization of the authorial/authority power that my privilege affords me. In doing so, I am taking the stories of my family – my relations, both in blood and proximity – and incorporating myself into them, them into me. In a way, I feel justified to speak the stories of my family *as if they were my own*, even while attempting to destabilize the coherence of what *my own story* might be. The paradox is not lost on me. While I rely on speaking, framing and interpreting the words of my mother, my aunt and my grandmother – and, admittedly, feel I have the right to enter these stories as intimately related to me because they are my genealogy – I do not want to push aside the ethical complications of speaking anyone else's stories, even those of your parents or grandparents.

I have given unaltered and mostly un-commented-upon quotations from family members a great deal of “airtime” in this text. I have done this because I am aware, as Ruthellen Josselson writes, that “language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation” (1996, 62). Knowing this – narrating the lives of others, even intimate

others, inevitably simplifies, misinterprets and misrepresents them – I have decided to allow my family to speak *in their own words* as much as possible before I proceed, with both caution and abandon, to unpack their stories. As a result of this investment in “airtime” for my family, this text is incredibly long. I apologize, but I am more invested in attempting an ethical process than I am in a short and snappy product. The methodologies I have used here are specific to me and my family.¹ *This is both a text of answering for, and a text to be spoken back to. Feel free to give it sass.*

The ethics of interpreting my living family members and our living stories differ from the ethics of entering Larry's writing. When I traveled to Chicago in March, my Aunt Trudy supplied me not only with anecdotes and verbatim conversations, the transparency of her steady analytic mind, but also with scores of Larry's old letters, photographs and essays. These texts – Larry's handwriting, Larry's hand – have caused me a great deal of discomfort and confusion.

When we talk about hauntings, we explicitly engage a relationship with the past, or the passed-on. Engaging with the urgency of 16 year old Larry's letters home, all aching love and uniquely modified platitudes, or with the resigned and precise cynicism of his later birthday and holiday cards has been a difficult task. As this is a project about me, filtered through the lens of my struggling “I,” it seems always-true – in fact, perhaps, the only *true* thing about this project – that I will be re/framing, mis/interpreting and contextualizing the words and memories of my family from one uniquely situated vantage point. For all the arguments, anger and sadness – all the ruptures that my writing might cause in my family, my aunt, grandmother, and mother have a living site to contest – that is, living language. They can call me on the telephone, write me an angry letter, publish an editorial – hell, they can blog about it (certainly my mother, anyway).

1 For a clear and thorough exploration of the ethics of story-ownership and the situated role of the ethnographer in relation to family members and friends, see Carolyn Ellis' “Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research with Intimate Others,” *Qualitative Inquiry* Vol 13 No 3, 2007.

Larry does not have the access to that living narrative power.

The disjunction between Larry's language in his absence and the words of my family in their living presence causes me to think differently about how I ask his voice to penetrate the text. At first, I expected to put quotations from his letters while functionally incarcerated at the Orthogenic School in direct contact with Bruno Bettelheim's anti-Semitic, racist, "rehabilitative" diatribes. Later, I expected to put his own words – excerpts from his resumes, grad school papers and letters both deliberate and frantic – in dialogue with the family narratives about his being, his body, and his subjectivity. It occurred to me that I wanted, desperately, to make him *speak back to power*, be the power of psychiatry and racism, as manifest by Bettelheim, or the authority of his parents, the matriarch and (lapsed) patriarch.

This impulse – like everything else in this project – was to serve my own ends. I wanted Larry to speak back to power because it is something that I have, over the course of my life, wanted so desperately to both articulate and embody. *Be the change you want to see, resistance is everywhere and so forth*. The form of resistance that I have wanted to embody emerges from privilege and therefore (like everything else) is historical. Larry is part of this history, and, in his death, I do not want to use his language to serve an ends that this project is attempting to historicize, contextualize and, ultimately, become accountable to.

I have decided not to weave Larry's words into the analysis itself, at least not directly. Instead, I have included an appendix of some of Larry's letters. They are somewhat difficult to read – they're full of poetry and emotion, written in a scrawling, sprawling, urgent hand. I include them to give Larry's words proverbial airtime, to press them into the text and impress them upon the readers without explicit intervention. Suffice to say, the selection of the excerpts and their placement is intentional, is *mine* (as much as anything is), and therefore is rife with implicit interpretation and analysis. Such is the way of the world (or, at least, such is the way of the world

of this project). I hope that the tense lingering of t/his un/disturbed haunting at least allows a different story of Larry to emerge, even if it cannot be rightfully called *his* story.

As a whole, this project is a “bricolage”; rather, it is a decidedly interdisciplinary, politically framed study that uses a number of discourses and methodologies to situate my narrative voice in a historical context. In their essay “Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research,” Joe Kinchloe and Peter McLaren claim that bricolage is “dedicated to a form of rigor that is conversant with numerous modes of meaning-making and knowledge production” (2004, 318). They note that “bricolage” is self-conscious work, “self-conscious in the sense that researchers try to become aware of the ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research as well as their own subjective, intersubjective and normative reference claims” (2004, 305).

In their articulation of the work of “bricolage,” Kinchloe and McLaren intentionally frame the academic “bricoleur” as a researcher invested in the contingent languages and historical notions of post-structuralism, post-colonialism and critical race theory. They write, “the critical researcher-as-bricoleur abandons the quest for some naïve concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality and social locations of other researchers and the ways they shape the production and interpretation of knowledge” (2004, 316).

Kinchloe and McLaren claim that the “bricoleur” is committed to “ask[ing] questions about how what is has come to be, whose interests are served by particular institutional arrangements” (2004, 321). In seeking my personal history as a component of broader histories of marginality and privilege, I feel invested in keeping these questions alive in content and in structure. To do this, I will call upon theorists from a number of tradition; broadly, I am focusing on the work of critical race theory, discourse analysis, cultural studies, disability studies, post-colonial theory and a form of queer theory that, as Deborah Britzman explains, “proposes to think

identities in terms that place as a problem the production of normalcy and that confound the intelligibility of apparatuses that produce identity as repetition” (2000, 81).

I have called this project as a whole “Extension” and framed each theoretical segment as an “extension” in response to a piece that Larry wrote – or, rather, a piece that I think he wrote. While in Chicago this past March doing the research for this project, I stumbled upon a short, dense essay, all ancient computer paper and unequivocal typeface. Stark, yet complex, the essay was titled “Does the existence of consciousness mean that quantum mechanics should be extended?” It was in a box of Larry's things that my aunt Trudy has been slowly sorting through in the year since his death; amidst all of Larry's old letters, photographs and cards it had the decided air of authorship about it. *Larry's*.

The question struck me. I have very little knowledge of quantum mechanics, but what I do know seems to bend the assumed laws of linear time and three-dimensional space in theoretically satisfying ways. Sure, a single quantum particle can be in two spaces simultaneously; of course observing anything has an irreversible impact on its outcome. Yes, there is no truth, only circumstance.

So does consciousness – our sense of continuity through linear time, our very subjectivity – require a rethinking, an *expansion* of quantum mechanics?

In reading this short piece, I extended beyond the soft and wrinkled outer edges of my comprehension to meet the extension of Larry – his words, his questions (or so I am led to believe) into my life. In this encounter – his extension forward, my extension back, our extension around each other (authored by me, of course) – I noticed that perhaps it is *our understanding of what constitutes personhood* that must be extended, through the extension of ghosts into our present. Perhaps what I am attempting is an extension of Jewish identity into critical self-reflection, into accountable privilege; or an extension of my own identity into madness and

queerness.

Susanne Gannon writes:

The body is a landscape that folds outside to inside and inside to outside at the same time. This body (writing) is also always intercorporeal, experienced in relation to the other. This interconsciousness is the scene of the body, the self, the other, and of writing, all at the same time. (2006, 491)

I hope to extend myself both outside to inside and inside to outside, to find multiplicity, and, in that multiplicity, the beginnings of accountable situated identity. This is what Elizabeth Grosz would call a “more profound and braver experiment in conceptualization” (2003, 14). It is an attempt to

think the subject, identity, agency, community – all terms reliant on a notion of some internal force – explicitly in terms of forces, agencies (in the plural), operative vectors, points of intensity, lines of movement, resistance or complacency. We need to think subjects in terms of their strategic placement within power networks; that is, in terms of what they are able to do, more than in terms of who they are (2003, 14).

EXTENDING THE LI(V)ES OF OTHERS

Chapter Two: Coming Down With a Case of Whiteness

Griffin and Bruno, Sittin' in a Tree

Even when speaking of the most intimate thing..it is better to be aware than an exegesis is in progress, that you carry its detour, its contour, and its memory inscribed within the culture of your body

-Derrida, "A Certain 'Madness' Must Watch Over Thinking"

I'm sorting through the emotional and literal detritus of a death in the family. It is late February 2008, barely a month after my uncle Larry's death, and already I am looking for, if not answers, at least for the potent questions. *The right ones*. I am in the (a)void above the 47th parallel – in the political entity now called Canada, I am without any blood relations. *Is this normal? What am I hiding from* Only 765 km, give or take, from New York City, I am able to avoid the mirror of the Atlantic Ocean, the self-reflection required by citizenship in your country of origin. I am wondering if I came here to avoid thinking about death. *So long as I am far enough away from the place I was born, nothing can touch me.*

So far, death has left my father's family alone, for the most part, though speaking this fact fills me with dread. Am I calling it towards us? Pointing out some bureaucratic oversight, soon to be "corrected"? My mother's family, though, has lost its share – my grandfather Oscar Treiman died in 1991, and Larry died in 2008. The two men of the Treiman line departed, both somewhat unexpectedly, mythological scraps to be sorted through by my grandmother, my aunt, my mother. *Lost men, lost boys; a heavy burden indeed.*

I wonder if loss has an address, an age. I have been haunted by Larry – and Oscar – for years; I was haunted before they left Chicago for the softness of earth below. The ghosts of their psychiatrization, their institutionalization – their madness, I would say – left a strange bureaucratic, bio-medical discursive trail of "potential genetic impact" on my life which followed me like trained dog through sleep therapy and behavioral intervention in my childhood. I have

been carrying it with me in my medical records and, in a different way, in my consciousness, for years. *How do you know the weight of something if you carry it all the time?*

I am sure that the particular ways in which death has struck the Treiman family, and the particular ways we talk about it, are theoretically significant to my queer, Jewish body; there is something uniquely heavy and ambivalent about the stories told of these lost Jewish men. The ghosts of failed procreation and lapsed strength – the never-to-be-born line of Treimans, that loss for the Jewish people; the psychiatrization that carries an ableist social story of “weakness” discursively married to “femininity” – haunt what my mother, aunt and grandmother say about Oscar and Larry Treiman. I can hear the ghostly never-to-be Treimans – the kids my uncle may have had, I hear the voice of heteropatriarchal culture pronounce, *if only things had been different* – even in my mother's post-Bat Mitzvah mandate - “you have to raise your children Jewish, because of the Holocaust.”

It is late February and I am looking for clues. Larry's death – and life – has something to say about Jewishness and masculinity; in my family, in particular, and in the story of the whitening of Jews in North America in the later part of the 20th century. What Larry's death has to say about Jewishness and masculinity, in turn, affects how my genderqueer identity and sometime-psychiatrization, has still been met with privilege and acceptance in a heteropatriarchal world. In looking for leads – *I have to figure this out!* - I find myself reading up on the Orthogenic School, where Larry was institutionalized as a teenager. I notice that Bruno Bettelheim – the child psychologist famous for the “refrigerator mother” theory of autism, and author of a book on fairy tale mythology that I read five years ago – was stepping down from his post as director of the Orthogenic School just as Larry was entering it.

Fast forward to now. Or “now,” rather. It is May 2009. I have been researching Bruno Bettelheim's life, looking for clues, cues. As it turns out, Bruno Bettelheim is a key figure in the

story of Jewishness, madness and masculinity and the whitening of Jewish identity in North America. His legacy as director of the Orthogenic School in Chicago had direct impacts Larry's four-year stay at the school and on the psychopathologization of the Jewish body and the racialization of madness in general. *I may have found my guy.*

Looking at Bettelheim's life and practice is like peeling the skin away from the broad body of a major historical narrative. To encounter Bettelheim's life as a case-study for Jewish complicity in the whitening and de-pathologizing of Jewish identity (racist, anti-Semitic and *schooled* as this project is), we must first explore some crucial theoretical lenses – that is, disability studies notions of eugenics and the race-making project of rehabilitation.

This section functions as a relatively site-specific historical study meant to open out to broad questions of accountability. Though I intend to deal exclusively with theoretical perspectives on disability, race, and masculinity through the story of Bettelheim, I hope it speaks *towards* a more nuanced study of how historical accountability might be configured, recognizing the complexity of privilege/marginality and attempting to situate personal agency within systems of domination. *Who is complicit in what? Where? How much? What now?*

Exploring Bruno Bettelheim's work at the Orthogenic School as a tacitly eugenic project is crucial to understanding how eugenic logics were at play in the whitening of Jewish identity over the 20th century. In attempting to make eugenics a meaningful framework through which to understand Bettelheim's relationship to disability and Jewishness, Bettelheim himself will be called into a history of oppressors under heteropatriarchal, Christian, ableist citizenship structures. Bettelheim's personal identity as a Jew, an immigrant and a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps makes him a uniquely complex character in the history of eugenic educational and medical logics. A study of his unique positionality might provide us, later, opportunity to strategize the “how”s and “where”s of accountable haunting, as I, too, find myself

uniquely (and, categorically, differently) positioned in a matrix of privilege and marginality. I should be treated as the ghostly presence in this section; though I will rarely, if ever, discuss my actual life circumstance from this point onwards, it should be assumed that I am a haunting presence here, as Bettelheim has come to haunt me.

It is important to keep in mind the larger project: situating personal accountability within a matrix of systemic oppression, particularly as it relates to Jewish complicity in structures of oppression. Though I may not address the questions that linger in the margins directly, it is important to remember what we are asking. Namely, what is the difference between (en)forced assimilation and eugenics? Where do we draw the line? Who is entitled to draw it? In what contexts is that differentiation relevant? How do we hold in tension personal accountability and a recognition of bio-power/systemic critique?

As a survivor, an anti-Semitic Jew and a medical professional in post WWII America, Bettelheim's practice of psychotherapy simultaneously helped to author and was subject to ambivalent narratives of white citizenship. This notion of citizenship is borrowed from Sunera Thobani's Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada. For Thobani, “citizenship” is both a state-negotiated relationship to legitimacy in the colonial environment (legal access to the “rights” of national citizenship structure) and a relationship to subjectivity (2007).

Thobani posits that “citizenship” subjectivity is invented through the exaltation of hegemonic subject positions under heteropatriarchal Christian capitalism and the corollary degradation of Othered subjectivities. Exalted citizenship is always racialized, classed, gendered; it is also always ableist and heteronormative (even in modern “homonationalist” formulations) (2007, 5). This chapter functions as a study of Bettelheim's “rehabilitation” of “emotionally disturbed” children as a project of white citizenship building intended to assimilate “reformable”

bodies and guarantee Bettelheim's own access to power.

Sunera Thobani also notes a national mandate for the formerly marginalized to pick up the mantle of the oppressor in exchange for the rights and privileges of citizenship. This seems particularly apt in thinking about the system of exchanges at play in Bruno Bettelheim's life and practice – namely, participation in oppression for survival and white colonial anti-Semitism for Jewish identity. These exchanges allowed Bettelheim access to white privilege; they were only feasible, however, because of the particular time and place of Bruno Bettelheim's practice.

I posit that Bettelheim helped consolidate a notion of white citizenship accessible to formerly marginalized “ethnic” white people at the cost of a deepening marginalization of visibly disabled and racialized people through classificatory and rehabilitative processes. His select technology and realm of influence was the Orthogenic School. Further, I will make the case that the technology of the school was uniquely open for Jewish complicity in race-making projects in the middle-to-late 20th century.

Following the work of disability scholars like Nirmala Ervelles, Claudia Malacrida and indigenous/anti-racist scholars like Andrea Smith, Ward Churchill, Audra Simpson alike, we find that schools have historically functioned in North America as sites of “intervention,” and “training” of American youth into oppressive models of proper citizenship. Caught in the post-enlightenment (neo) liberal discourse of the necessity – and inherent benevolence – of (state-condoned “rational”) knowledge, mandatory public educational structures – elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools – have historically been (and continue to be) key in the “civilizing” project of the United States and the dissemination of (white) national narratives (Churchill, 2004: x). State-approved “curriculum” functions as a tool for the harmonization of public knowledge and identity in a normalizing space.

Schools are assimilative structures. The project can be traced almost infinitely

backwards, but it seems relevant to locate the history of the assimilative technology of schools in the “Americanization” (read: cultural genocide) of First Nations children in the United States. This historical reality continues today through “standard” curriculum of white- settler-only versions of history; through the systemic under funding of schools in low-income and racialized areas, and phenomena such as the school-to-prison pipeline that mark the bodies of racialized youth for “corrective” or “normalizing” procedures like residential treatment facilities and incarceration. The more outright carceral sites in the educational system – residential treatment facilities, for example -- both explicitly (“normalization”) and implicitly (“schooling”) invoke the mandate for “normalized” bodies and minds. As will be explored later, many modern “cutting edge” schools – my expensive private elementary school, for example – have been functionally used uniquely by Jews to promote a certain “progressive” educational mandate that has tacitly been in line with these selfsame projects of race-making and normalization.

I believe that the project of assimilation/normalization attempts to straighten bodies *towards* a Christian ideal that promotes heteropatriarchal masculinity as crucial to whiteness and, therefore (in this logic) normalcy. Those bodies that can be intervened upon through select technologies towards passable white Christianity are granted (often precariously) privileges and complicity in the realm of the dominant. Those whose bodies cannot or will not be made passable are further marginalized, erased or murdered. It is my contention that educational/rehabilitative interventions designed to *straighten towards* a white Christian ideal activate eugenic logics.

The violent logic of *straightening* is both a discursive and tangibly practical reality. Just as historical narratives are *peopled*, they are also *geographical*; that is, they occur at specific sites. As Bruno Bettelheim's life story functions as an access point for the study of Jewish whitening, a case study of the Orthogenic School might exemplify the race-making project of rehabilitation.

The Orthogenic School is a residential treatment facility for “behaviorally disturbed” children and adolescents on the University of Chicago campus in Chicago, IL. It has been open since 1915, despite allegations of intense abuse and neglect of children under Bruno Bettelheim's direction (Pollack 25). The Orthogenic School runs a residential elementary and high school in a “therapeutic and educational model” for children with “profound emotional issues” (Orthogenic School n/d).

Bruno Bettelheim ran the Orthogenic School between 1944 and 1973. In taking over directorship of the Orthogenic School, Bettelheim carved a place for himself in a legitimated/legitimizing apparatus of assimilation. Under his supervision, the Orthogenic School gained a stellar reputation for “successfully” rehabilitating teenagers; during his tenure, Bruno Bettelheim rose to relative fame and notoriety as a child psychologist. His legacy has shaped public discourses on autism and child psychology in profound ways and profoundly violent ways.

For the purposes of this study, The Orthogenic School will be treated as what Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell would call a “cultural location of disability.” For Snyder and Mitchell, a “cultural location of disability” is a site where “disabled people find themselves deposited, often against their will” (2006, 3). These sites speak volumes about the cultural response to what Snyder and Mitchell call “human difference” (2006, 3).

Semantics

Let me pause for a moment. “Schooling,” “citizenship,” and “straightening” are all crucial concepts. I will be using them to describe Bruno Bettelheim's life and practice. There are other terms – some more banal or typical – that will require some careful thought. This section – indeed, this project – deals with a certain normative (heteropatriarchal, white, ableist and Christian) stories. I want to take time to define what I am talking about when I say “disability,” “masculinity,” and the like. I will be speaking a lot about “men” and, to a lesser extent, “women.”

In telling stories about formations of masculinity, this section both situates and traffics in a binary logic that is not only theoretically abhorrent to me, but writes out the possibility for my particular genderqueer identity.

When I talk about “masculinity,” it should be apparent that what I am describing is a social process, which both dictates and is dictated by broad cultural norms. However, discussing specific individuals puts me in the position to call certain people “men,” and others “women.” These are terms that my family – and, more generally, most English-speaking North Americans not embedded in queer communities or queer discourses – uses, and so it is essential, in certain circumstances, that I encounter and mobilize them, at least in quotation.

As a feminist (*the good kind*, or so I hope), a queer and a self-identified radical (more on that, but much later), rather than talking about Oscar and Larry as “men” and Trudy, Ruth and Sho as “women,” I am compelled to talk about Oscar and Larry (and, for that matter, my brother and father, Bruno Bettelheim and most of the men who appear as ghostly or explicit presences in this text) as cisgendered men – that is, people who were assigned male at birth, socialized male, and self-identified as men, just as I am compelled to talk about my aunt, grandmother and mother (but definitively not myself) as cisgendered women. Though the term “cisgendered” has been in circulation in queer and trans circles since the early nineties, I encountered it in Julia Serano's 2007 book Whipping Girl, and have found it profoundly useful in my daily life. However, while it is crucial terminology for situating gender and sex both as an ongoing process of bio-medical and cultural socialization, threaten to become cumbersome with overuse.

Further, and perhaps more importantly, consistently using “cisgendered” might function to foreground and emphasize my analytic voice in circumstances where it is not theoretically sound to do so. So, for the remainder of this project, I would like to operate with the assumption that if I am speaking about “men” and “women,” both those in my family and the social

archetypes, I am speaking of cisgendered men and women, queered as they might be in their social appearance.

Many of my semantic choices in this section are also indebted to disability studies scholarship and, specifically, to Snyder and Mitchell's work. Their study of eugenic logics in The Cultural Locations of Disability helps to lay the groundwork for my study of Bettelheim's practice. I use – and would like to promote – their definition of disability. For Snyder and Mitchell, the word “disability” functions as a “tool of cultural diagnosis...a way of understanding how formulas of abnormality develop and serve to discount entire populations as biologically inferior” (2006, 12). Throughout this chapter, I use the words “disabled”/ “disability” and “mad”/ “unruly” to identify bodies and behaviors that are socially marked as “deviant” from an idealized norm. When I use “mad,” I am calling upon the history of the Mad Pride movement, and psychiatric survivor produced discourse, where “mad” is used to represent the wide range of experiences of non-normativity that are forced into medical legibility through medical/psychiatric technologies. I prefer the term “mad” because of its fluidity, its very vagueness and its association with anger. *We should all be pretty pissed*. Often, I use these terms interchangeably. In doing this, I am intentionally calling into question the narrative coherence of our stories of embodied/behavioral difference. More often than not, though, I use the term “disability” to think through non-normative embodiments and behaviors, because I am invested in casting a wide net.

At the core, much of the organizing logic of this section, and my project at large, is Foucaultian. The process of *making undesirable* bodies that are seen as risks to the normalization (read: whitening, “rehabilitating,” etc) of the body politic is a technology of government in the neo-liberal nation state. In thinking of “technologies” and “government” in Foucault's shadow, I defer to the definitions Nikolas Rose outlined in his essay “Identity, Genealogy, History.” On “Government,” Rose writes:

Government here does not indicate a theory, but rather a certain perspective from which one might make intelligible the diversity of attempts by authorities of different sorts to act upon the actions of others in relation to objectives of national prosperity, harmony, virtue, productivity, social order, discipline, emancipation, self-realization, and so forth. (1996, 134)

His related definition of “technology” is, I believe, equally useful to this particular study and so I quote it at length. He writes:

Technology, here, refers to any assembly structured by a practical rationality government by a more or less conscious goal. Human technologies are hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, persons, systems of judgment, buildings and spaces, underpinned at the programmatic level by certain presuppositions about, and objectives for, human beings. One can regard the school, the prison, the asylum as examples of one species of such technologies, those which Foucault deemed disciplinary and which operate in terms of a detailed structuring of space, time, and relations amongst individuals through procedures of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment... (1996, 132)

A final note on language: it is important to recognize that, when speaking of Christianity in this text, I am speaking of pervasive Western moral/izing mandates that emerge from a Christianity that has been secularized. Through exploring the work of scholars on Jewishness and whiteness in general and Daniel Boyarin and Richard Dyer in specific, I intend to make apparent the Christian colonial morays that have been made to appear secular in North American culture.

Structure

Though this section is functionally a literature review, it is also an attempt to perform intersectional analysis through case study. Therefore, it mobilizes multiple theoretical lenses in conversation to approach questions that emerge from Bruno Bettelheim's life and work.

Part one of this section is entitled “Rehabilitation.” It contends with the professionalized/ implicitly Christian history of “charity” sites of containment for the mad and disabled. I posit that “residential treatment schools” must be thought alongside the genocidal legacy of residential/boarding schools for First Nations people in North America. Therefore, I draw upon disability studies literature in conjunction with theories of schooling and Christian colonialism to explore the ways in which the schooling project is always inherently implicated in the

normalization of a national body.

The second part of this section, “Bruno Bettelheim,” explores Bettelheim's narrative of “overcoming” his concentration camp experience and Jewish identity. Looking at Bettelheim's life as a study in the anxious Jewish narratives of masculinity and queerness might clarify how Bettelheim's personal and occupational struggle towards whiteness was, indeed, an implicit project and consolidation of the heterosexual masculine mandate. This section draws heavily on the work of Sander Gilman and Daniel Boyarin to situate Bettelheim on the landscape of Jewish stigma in the early 1900s.

Part three, “Orthogenic Schooling,” deals with the rehabilitative practice as a project of whitening at the Orthogenic School. I contend that, given the “white only” policy in place throughout the 1950s and 60s, the school separated the world into “reformable” and “unruly” bodies. I posit that Bettelheim may have been attempting to enact his own normalization through structuring a rehabilitative environment specifically for those “emotionally disturbed” children he deemed *as close as possible* to viable Christian whiteness. This, of course, leads into questions of accountability and complicity, which seem uniquely relevant when we think about Bettelheim's identity as a survivor and a participant in normalizing/eugenic structures.

So:

Let me tell you a ghost story.

Rehabilitation

Typical of those rationalities of governments that consider themselves 'liberal' is the simultaneous delimitation of the sphere of the political by reference to the right of the other domains – the market, civil society, and the family being the three most commonly deployed – and the invention of a range of techniques that would try to act on events in these domains without breaching their autonomy. It is for this reason that knowledges and forms of expertise concerning the internal characteristics of the domains to be governed assume particular importance in liberal strategies and programmes of rule, for these domains are not to be 'dominated' by rule, but must be known, understood, and related to in such a way that events within them – productivity and conditions of trade, the activities of civil associations, ways of rearing children and organizing conjugal relations and financial support within a household – support and do not oppose political objectives. In the case that we are discussing here, the characteristics of persons, as those 'free individuals' upon whom liberalism depends for its political legitimacy and functionality, assume a particular significance. Perhaps one could say that the general strategic field of all those programmes of government that regard themselves as liberal be defined by the problem of how free individuals can be governed such that they enact their freedom appropriately.

-Nikolas Rose, "Identity, Genealogy, History."

Disability studies, as an academic discipline and a political project, functions to historicize and intervene upon the binary construction of "normative" and "unruly" bodies, particularly under conditions of Western capitalism. As Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell write,

"disability" is not just another word for "social crisis" in all historical contexts; the United States and part of Europe manufactured the need to constitute a class of disabled citizens when individuals came to be increasingly defined by industrial labor practices within a capitalist marketplace.....the point is more than just a contention that difference comes to be devalued in modernity. Rather, it is that disabled bodies are constituted as unduly discordant within a rapidly solidifying fiction of an idealized American body politic. (2006, 24)

It is my contention, following Snyder and Mitchell, that bodies are marked "deviant" and "non viable" in the capitalist colonial landscape in racialized Christian terms. Disability and racialization are both conceived in public discourse through the language of impurity and "pollution" (Malacrida 2005, 526), opposed to the "purity" of proper subjects of the white race

(Dyer 1997, 15). At once a social threat and a social charge, “mad” and “disabled” identities present a conundrum for the (Christian) nation state – they represent a “threat” that endangers the powerful hegemony of the white, heteropatriarchal able-bodied normate (simply by existing outside of the normative structures of what is deemed “viable human life”), and are simultaneously charged to the paternalistic “protection”/ “care” of a state invested in cultivating the appearance of implicitly Christian benevolence. This section focuses on one particular response to the emergence of non-normative identities: rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is intertwined with the history of charity and that of eugenics, both of which retain the patina of Christianity even in so-called secular North American culture.

In A History of Disability, Henri Jacques Stiker notes that a biblical paternalistic construction of the value of “charity” (and the inherent elevation of the “charitable”/demeaning of the “person in need”) continue to underscore the mandate for state-sponsored care of disabled people. He writes,

Christian history has elevated charity into a universal (since, fundamentally, it came from God and belonged to him). Charity, even understood in sociological terms and no longer theological, appears as the superior value and soon afterwards the remedy, the supreme solution, always sufficient, necessary and effective. (2000, 173)

Nikolas Rose notes that this charitable Christian structure is imbued with a sort of “risk thinking”; non-normative bodies are marked both dangerous (“risky”) and in danger (“at risk”). The paternalistic charity mandate functions to neutralize the inherent threat (risk) that non-normativity poses to hegemony by focusing on the need to control the lives that people with non-normative identities lead (because they are “at risk”). In this way, technologies of the state are compelled to enforce assimilation on non-normative embodiments and behaviors through quarantine, elimination and rehabilitation (2006).

In Madness and Civilization, Foucault maps the shift in the discursive and geographical practices surrounding bodies marked as “mad” in Western Europe from the sites of quarantine

targeting the “afflicted” (mad, poor, disabled, racialized, otherwise marked deviant all lumped together in asylums) to carceral systems engineered to “train” and “discipline” deviant bodies through coercive technologies of behavior modification (Foucault 1965). The goal of rehabilitative sciences is to “‘extinguish’ bad behaviors through dispassionate and scientific means, with the goal of shaping inmates behavior in non-violent and controlled ways” (Malacrida 2005, 528). The shift over the 20th century from containment to “modification” or “reintegration” belies the relatively unchanged narrative – the separation of the social world into “normal”/ “functional” and “abnormal”/ “unruly” bodies based on a white, ableist, gendered sexist, heteropatriarchal colonial ideal. “Abnormal” bodies are further classified, separated into those who can be rehabilitated *towards* that ideal and those that can or will not.

As “disability” and “madness” threaten the social norm, there is a mandate to either eliminate (through incarcerative or medical means) or, increasingly, “straighten” non-normative bodies/minds through practices of “rehabilitation,” exacting a “purification” through increasingly hidden (and increasingly biological) means. Still, however, the world operates under “a politic that *individualizes* human worth, *essentializes* variations in human capacities, *reduces* social phenomena to the aggregate of individual actions and *discriminates against, constrains* or *excludes* those found to be biologically abnormal or defective” (Rose 1996, 2).

Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell note that charity, quarantine and rehabilitation all “accomplish their debilitating effects through taxonomies or naming, the statistical calculation of average and nonstandard bodies, restrictive public policy implementation and especially participation in a normative science of eugenic origin.” (2006, 5) They continue, “The eugenics period provided the tools and rationale for hygienic drive toward the valorization of perfection and normalization. These goals stand at the heart of the modernist impulse.” (ibid)

Henri Jacques Stiker maps the emergence of “rehabilitation” onto the post WWI world,

noting an increased desire to integrate “deviant” bodies into an increasingly globalized dominant culture. Much of this desire for integration has an economic character, as it became increasingly possible/desirable under global capitalism to extract labor from any/every body, dissolving difference to the greatest extent into dominant culture. He writes,

rehabilitation marks the appearance of a culture that attempts to complete the act of identification, of making identical. This act will cause the disabled to disappear and with them all that is lacking, in order to assimilate them, drown them, dissolve them into a greater social whole (2000, 28).

Rehabilitation appears through the language of benevolent necessity, but demands that bodies accept and conform to normative capitalist Christian heteropatriarchal demands.

He continues:

The trick consists in this: in a liberal, prosperous and technologically advanced society, means can be found so that the disabled no longer appear different. They will be admitted on the condition that they are perfectly assimilated to the able-bodied. (2000, 130)

Rehabilitation under the medical sciences relies on the consolidation of the power of doctors/social workers to prescribe normativity. In “The Politics of Life Itself,” Rose writes,

These new pastors of the soma espouse the ethical principles of informed consent, autonomy, voluntary action and choice, and non-directiveness. But in the practices of this pastoral power, such principles must be translated into a range of micro-technologies for the management of communication and information. These blur the boundaries of coercion and consent. (2006, 9/10)

In tracing rehabilitative sites – sheltered workshops that extract cheap or free labor from disabled bodies, where forced “participation” in (exploitative) industrial production is called “therapeutic” (and therefore framed as benevolent/necessary); assimilative physical and drug therapy programs designed to minimize the appearance of non-normativity; hospitals, educational facilities and residential sites intended to increase the appearance of participation in capitalist labor structures – Stiker claims that rehabilitation seeks to “straighten up” the “sick” body to “functional productivity” in capitalist structures without regard to individual needs, desires and

bodily sovereignty. As white identity has been configured as “the position of being without properties, unmarked, universal, just human” (Dyer 1997, 38), productivity/viability on the colonial landscape implies whiteness.

If, as Dyer writes, colonial whiteness is predicated on “Christianity, ‘race’ and enterprise/imperialism” (1997, 14), then the project of rehabilitation is a project of *straightening towards* white Christianity. Sheltered workshops (which posit “cure” through application of the Protestant work ethic) and residential treatment facilities (which intervene on non-normative bodies through psychoanalysis, incarceration and psycho pharmaceuticals) press bodies *towards* the colonial “ideal.”

The mandate to normalize or efface any appearance of non-normativity is a project of consolidating proper citizenship. In their study of eugenics, Snyder and Mitchell write that “the material body of the citizen (with all of its variety of appearances, capacities, and vulnerabilities)” and “the idealized body of the nation (with all of its nationalistic implications that propelled the question of individual biology into a matter of public hygiene management)” were conflated during the period of scientific eugenics (2006, 24). They note that the personal commitment to assimilation indicated the quality of citizen-subjectivity. They write,

to take care of oneself became synonymous with an obligation to the improvement of the nation...for the national body to become increasingly 'coherent,' citizens must begin to recognize themselves as either contributors to or detractors from the overall health of the body politic. (ibid)

I argue that Bettelheim's practice at the Orthogenic School continued in the eugenic logic that conflates the personal body with the national body; further, still, that Bettelheim's own secure assimilation was predicated on his sense of himself as a “contributor” to the “overall health of the body politic.” As we proceed through a study of Bettelheim's “milieu” therapy at the Orthogenic School, it is important to keep in mind resonances between Bettelheim's assimilation-as-therapy

and the racist musings of Richard Pratt, founder of the first United States off-reserve boarding school. His “kill the Indian, save the Man” philosophy posited the following: “Transfer the savage-born infant to surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit” (Smith 2005, 36). Residential education in the boarding schools advocated for the “curative power” of the white Christian home-space, rendered “effective” through removal, displacement, and torture.

With perhaps less outright genocidal fervor, this model has been at play in most residential schooling sites for children in America – with the important exception of elite boarding schools. As the study “The Historical Role of Residential Treatment” in the journal Reclaiming Our Children makes abundantly clear, this model was used throughout the 1800 and 1900s when “homeless and impoverished children were sent far away to farming communities in the Midwest...westward to Christian homes.” (2008, 44)

I mention these schools not to create a relationship to equivalence between racialization/indigenization and disability, but simply to note how ableism and racist colonialism interlock at the site white Christian mandate for a “pure” social body. When Andrea Smith notes the discursive “transformation of native bodies into a pollution of which the colonial body must constantly purify itself” (2005, 9), it is hard not to see the specter of disability in the state and medical language produced on indigeneity, just as racist colonialism is reflected in state and medical on disability. As racialized bodies have been physiologically and psychologically pathologized as a tool of colonial oppression throughout history, it seems important to keep this connection in mind.

Further, it is also important to note that, while Bettelheim will be taken up as the brutal normalizing force that he was, his school and practice were considered “progressive” at the time. Many institutions that promote and enact violence onto the bodies of their students (their student

bodies) are. The notion of “progressivism” will become crucial in later sections, particularly those that contend with the elementary school that I attended. Though I will make only brief, broad gestures at Jewish purchase on “progressive” education in this section, it is an important theoretical thread to keep in mind.

The Man Himself

Bruno Bettelheim was born in Austria in 1903. At this time in Western Europe, socially, governmentally, and medically, Jewishness had for centuries been understood in the terms of illness, disability, and queerness.

In Love+Marriage=Death, Sander Gilman writes that Jews who migrated to Germany in the wake of political violence in Eastern Europe in the 1880s were marked as “disease carriers” and “sick individuals,” who, upon arrival, were “herded into barracks, stripped, showered... disinfected” (1998, 101). By the 1890s, it had become commonplace to recognize the Jew as “the hysteric” and “the feminized Other” (ibid). In state, medical and popular discourse, Jewishness became linked to disability and marked for quarantine. Gilman has done much important historical work to situate these pathologizing discursive structures of identity as essential to the racist, gendered sexist and eugenic hegemonies of post-Enlightenment white Christian nation-states within empire, focusing particularly on Germany, Austria and France between the mid-1800s and mid-1900s.

According to Gilman, Jews in Europe – particularly Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews forced into Diasporas by pogroms – were both practically and discursively Othered through the ascription sociological, physiological and psychological distinguishing traits defined and diagnosed by popular race science. Social policy, discursive tradition and popular culture represented Jews – particularly Jewish men – as racialized and feminized bodies.

Jews were seen as “ugly” - this was particularly associated with the size of the nose, the

eyes and the distribution of bodily hair (Gilman 1985; 1991; 1998). They were also seen as “incomprehensible” or “primitive.” This “primitivism” was related to Jews' association with a sort of mythic, biblical nomad-culture, and associated with Jewish use of Yiddish in Germany, Austria and France (Gilman 1991; 1998). Jews were understood to be “relics,” specific to a remote biblical time and place, inherent out of step with the modern world. This notion seems inherently linked to Darwin's late-nineteenth-century notions that what is now called intellectual disability (then “feeble mindedness” or “idiocy”) was a kind of “evolutionary throwback” (Snyder and Mitchell 2006, 13).

As Boyarin, Itzkovitz and Pellegrini posit in their introduction to Queer Theory and the Jewish Question, this pervasive European sense that Jews were somehow *out of time* or *out of place* – the very incomprehensibility of Jewish identity – led to a queering of popular representation of Jewish identity. They write:

In the face of such a “semiotic void,” Freedman suggests, “a language of sexual aberration could serve to ground the radically amorphous figure of the Jew: the simultaneously emerging terminologies of sexual perversion could provide a definition for Jewish identity that was increasingly understood as pliable, metamorphic, ambiguous.” This developing language, with its scientific heft, offered at least “one tidy box” in which to contain Jews' “proliferating indecipherability.” (2003, 14)

Jews were marked as “sexual aberrations” in a number of crucial ways. First, Jewish sexual practice, in European discursive culture, was understood to be deviant, often perverse, and Jewish procreation the result of “inbreeding.” (Gilman 1985; 1991; 1998). Further, stereotypes of Jewish gendered performance proliferated – Jewish men were seen as unfit for labor; men were read as “sissies” and Jewish women, when they appeared as “phallic monsters.” (Boyarin 1997, xxii).

It is crucial to note that my focus on representations of Jewish masculinity is both problematic and crucial. Bettelheim's life and work focused on constructing appropriate white masculinity. Larry's death – and Oscar's – has been taken up in the broader discourse of Jewish

masculinity. However, constructions of Jewish masculinity – and Jewish men – are not only reliant on processes like “feminization,” they affect/ed Jewish femininity and, of course, Jewish women. In keeping with the patriarchy of academia, Jewish women are often remarkably absent from studies and critiques of the stigmatization of Jewish identity in Europe. As Anne Pellegrini writes in her essay “Whiteface Performances: 'Race,' Gender and Jewish Bodies,” “Significantly, in the implicit equation of Jews and women, the Jewish female body goes missing. All Jews are womanly, but no women are Jews” (1997, 109).

Pellegrini's words are, of course, tongue-in-cheek admonishments. Of course women are Jews and, further, despite (and/or resultant from, depending on how you look at it) the alarming lack of theorization on Jewish women, Jewish women's lives were deeply and profoundly affected by both subtle and overt stigmatization, stereotyping and pathologization. It seems that Jewish women – simultaneously represented as “monstrous,” “masculine” and exotic, controlling and oversexed – were often called into the European project of “civilizing” the Jews tacitly, by association (Boyarin 1997, xvii). He notes:

homologies between the 'liberal' colonizing impulse directed toward those Others within Europe and toward the colonized outside of Europe insofar as for both it is constituted by a demand that their sexual practices be 'reformed' to conform to the liberal bourgeois regime. One of the most common of liberal justifications for the extension of colonial control over a given people and for the maintenance of the civilizing mission is the imputed barbarity of the treatment of women within the culture under attack (1997, xvii)

The ambivalence in the characterization of Jewish women – they both *needed to be saved* (from their barbarous culture) and *needed to be stopped* (as exotic, controlling or monstrous threats to “appropriate” femininity) – will be addressed later in great detail. Let it suffice, then, for me to admit to – and admonish myself for – the lack of attention to representations of Jewish women. Let their very lack be a ghostly presence that haunts both this text and its subject matter: Bruno Bettelheim's life.

Paul B. Franken notes, “The contrast between the virile male laborer, who works with his hands rather than with his mind and eyes, and the intellectual, a puzzlingly genderless 'person,' dovetails with the anti-Semitic characterizations of Jewish men as effeminate” (2003, 125).

Daniel Boyarin's Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Jewish Male, traces both the “widespread sensibility that being Jewish in our culture renders a boy effeminate” (1997, xiii) and the consequent reactions ranging from “cult of the tough Jew,” to “liberal and bourgeois...aspirations and preferred patterns of gendered life” to what he indicates as a 300-year old project of Europe's “civilizing mission” (1997, xvii). However, he makes an interesting note that is crucial to keep in mind. He writes:

Premodern Jewish culture, I will argue, frequently represented ideal Jewish men as feminized through various discursive means. This is not, moreover, a representation that carries with it any hint of internalized contempt or self-hatred. Quite the opposite; it was through this mode of conscious alternative gendering that Jewish culture frequently asserted its identity over-against its surroundings. If anything, as we shall see, it was the process of “Emancipation” of the late nineteenth century that produced both the pain and the difficulty of Jewish (male) identity (1997, 5)

Boyarin notes that a queered sense of Jewish difference - “The East European Jewish ideal of a gentle, timid, and studious male” - was part of a “traditional Jewish culture” (1997, 2). Bettelheim, however, was born into a family of Jews attempting to assimilate, struggling to assert its power and normativity in an environment that was hostile to any expressions of “traditional Jewish culture” (ibid). Therefore, it is possible that any expression of traditional Jewish identity – and its association with femininity, mental illness and racialized disability – may have produced anxiety for Bettelheim.

According to Richard Dyer, Jews have always occupied a position of relative structural instability -- at once deeply Othered and in a position of potential access to dominant white power. He relates this to Jewish proximity to the story of Christ. Dyer explains, “Christ was a Jew, but the Jews rejected him; they could have been, perhaps still could be, white – the Jews

have constituted the limit case of whiteness” (1997, 53). Despite the aggressive pathologization of Jewish identity, secular, culture-producing, “assimilated” Jews living in middle/upper-middle class positions were often treated as socially/economically/culturally viable in Western Europe.

Historian Timothy Pytell notes that Bettelheim “experienced a rather comfortable bourgeois upbringing” (2007, 642). Raised in a secular, middle class Jewish family, Bettelheim spent his early life in Vienna as an Austrian Jew, provisionally assimilated. Perhaps due to his very proximity to white privilege, Bettelheim was deeply affected in his childhood by the narratives of Jewish pathology and racialization, aided and abetted by his constant illness.

Richard Pollack describes Bettelheim as “a sickly child who suffered from dysentery, scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles, and mumps, as well as several attacks of influenza and tonsillitis which kept him in bed for many weeks at a time” (1998, 21), which brought his personal identity into direct contact with narratives of Jewish “weakness.” Throughout his study of Bettelheim's life, biographer Richard Pollack notes that Bettelheim discussed his childhood illness with a bitter resolve that belied deep and profound shame.

In 1907, Bettelheim's father contracted syphilis, which led to “a breach between his parents” (Pytell 2007, 642). His father's syphilis “cast a pall so lasting that Bettelheim rarely spoke of the affliction outside of his family, and then not by name” (Pollack 1998, 235). The mutually constituted pathologies of queered Jewish masculinity and syphilis have an impact on Jewish constructions of masculinity and, likely, on Bettelheim's personal relationship to masculine whiteness.

In the early 1900s, syphilis carried the stigma of both sexual perversion and sexual inadequacy; it marked bodies as both promiscuous (through narratives of transmission) and impotent, bringing it into discursive contact with Jewish “whoredom” (as sex workers and sex work were deeply stigmatized), “shamelessness” and “disease” (Gilman 1998, 152). Syphilis was

encoded not only with paradoxical sexuality/madness resonant with characterizations of Jewish identity, but also, like Jewishness was transmissible intergenerationally through the blood. Syphilis also narratives carried the promise of eventual madness. Thus, in Western Europe in the early 1900s, Jewishness became linked to syphilis transmission.² Pollack writes, “Like AIDS, syphilis brought with it a numbing sense of doom and a cruel social stigma; also, like its counterpart, it could flow quiescent in the bloodstream for many years” (1998, 25).

Jewish masculinity – already marked incomplete/inadequate/lacking (circumcision, non-normative sexual practices) – became a locus for further deep pathology. The syphilitic Jewish male body became categorically unruly: queered in its gendered and sexed expression and doomed to madness. In this way, anti-Semitic (and queerphobic/femme-phobic) narratives of Jewish masculinity emerged, in sharp relief to a the “pure” white masculinity. Jewish bodies became syphilitic and unruly – bodies out of control – whereas, according to Dyer, the quintessential “white spirit” in Christian discourses of whiteness can both “master and transcend the white body” (1997, 30). Robert Menzies writes of public discourse, both in Europe and North America at that time (and to this day), that “idealized the essential male citizen as productive, autonomous, white and sane” (2002, 197).

Syphilis in particular and queered masculinity in general marked Jewish male bodies *as bodies*. Daniel Boyarin writes:

However, and quite paradoxically, it is also this very insistence on embodiedness that marks the male Jew as being female, for maleness in European culture has frequently carried a sense of not-being-a-body, while the body has been inscribed as feminine. A medievalist, Clare Kinney, has recently written of another definitive moment in European cultural history: ‘real men – that is, representative Arthurian heroes – don’t have bodies.’ If this ‘not-having-a-body’ is defined as manliness, then Jewish men were not ‘real men’ at all, for they quite decisively were bodies, were defined by their bodies. (1997, 8)

For Bettelheim, his father’s syphilis likely threaten to further *embody* his identity.

2 The pathologizing discourse/treatment of syphilis (and other STIs) continues to be linked to racialized/Othered bodies. For further information, see histories of the (horrendous) Tuskegee Study, or current racialized/homophobic discourse on HIV/AIDS.

Syphilis had the potential to confirm Jewishness, and, consequently, the precariousness assimilated privilege. Sexual pathology, madness and queered masculinity all threatened to toss the Bettelheims back into the “incomprehensibility” of the language(s) of Jewish identity. Thus, Bettelheim took pains to distance himself from his father, making claims that he had “no suitable masculine figures with which to identify” (Pollack 1998, 24). Bettelheim re articulated the narrative pathologization of his father's queered masculinity by comparing him to a teacher he called Dr X, “a simpering fool who spoke with the voice of a eunuch” (Pollack 1998, 24).

In his teens, Bettelheim became interested in Freud. He later attended the University of Vienna, left for seven years following his father's death to direct the family lumber company, and finally graduated in 1938 with a degree in aesthetics. Karl Buhler, one of his mentors at Vienna, had a personal relationship with Freud and it was in his studies with Buhler – and, possibly, Freud himself – that Bettelheim claims to have gained the foundational knowledge upon which his “milieu therapy” was based.

It should be noted that there has been scholarship on Freud's complicity in anti-Semitic Jewish assimilation. As Boyarin, Itzkovitz and Pellegrini write, “It is the troubling difference of the Jewish man that Freud sought continually to keep at bay, in large part by projecting the specter of difference elsewhere and onto the bodies of some other others” (2003, 11). Bettelheim's relationship to Freud, and the radical reinterpretation of Freud's theories that constituted his trademark “milieu therapy,” shine and sparkle with a bitter anti-Semitic drive crucial to the project of Jewish assimilation into dominant white stream culture.

Of course, it was terribly dangerous to be a Jew in Europe in Bettelheim's time. On June 3rd, 1938, just months after the Anschluss, Bruno Bettelheim was taken to Dachau. The circumstances surrounding his internment are unclear. Though Bettelheim occasionally claimed to have been interned as a result of his alleged membership in the underground Austrian

resistance, Timothy Pytell writes that “it was most likely because his wife's flight from Vienna had drawn the attention of the Nazis” (Pytell 645). Bettelheim spent four months in Dachau before his transfer to Buchenwald on September 23, where he spent seven months. Bettelheim was released on April 14th of 1939. Though Bettelheim's camp experiences were undeniably horrific, he was able to maintain relative safety while interned as a person who was “assimilated, educated and spoke German” through bribery and favors (Pytell 2007, 647). In 1939, Bettelheim immigrated to the US.

Bettelheim's writing about his concentration camp experience occupies a fraught historical space. It is both lauded as survivor testimony and admonished for its “hyper objectivity” and implicit anti-Semitism. In 1942, three years after his arrival as a refugee in the United States, Bettelheim released his first and most influential article on his camp experience, “Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations.” In it, he claimed that that concentration camps functioned to “disintegrate the personality of the prisoner.” (Pytell 2007, 648) Strangely, he placed a great deal of the responsibility for this personality disintegration in Jewish “weakness.” He claimed that most interned Jews “regressed” to a kind of “infantile behavior” unique to Jewish identity. Bettelheim claimed that prisoners regressed under the oppression and developed “types of behavior characteristic of infancy or early youth” (Bettelheim in Pytell 2007, 648). They “lived, like children, only in the immediate present...and were unable to establish durable object relations” or “fought like early adolescents” (in Pytell 2007, 648). Bettelheim also noted a “final stage of disintegration,” wherein prisoners *became Nazis*, or changed their personalities “so as to accept various values of the SS” (in Pytell 2007, 648).

Bettelheim often wrote of Jewish identity as an “affliction,” and attributed what he saw as Jewish identification with Nazis as indicative of a lack of moral and physical strength. He would later make claims like “Jews went to their deaths like lemmings” (Pytell 2007, 651). Timothy

Pytell has done excellent work psychoanalyzing Bettelheim's need, in his text, to demean other prisoners within the camps, which I will now quote at length, in hopes that it will provide sufficient groundwork for a study of how Bettelheim attempted to enact his own whitening through the “rehabilitation” of other marked, nearly-white bodies. Pytell writes:

As he worked through the experience, it served his current psychological need to exploit those elements that were useful in constructing a version of surviving the extreme that suggests he alone, unlike the vast majority, was able to keep his personality intact. This version of survival, built on his peculiar perspective, dovetailed with his own psychological needs to overcome his sense of shame and humiliation at being victimized...In short, after his experience Bettelheim was bitter and angry and to reconstitute himself he had to reestablish his sense of self-worth. To do so...he [had to] suggest he had survived better, and to do so he had to belittle the other prisoners by turning them into infants and proto-Nazis (2007, 649)

The trauma of the camps is unimaginable. However, it seems that to “overcome” the camp experience, Bettelheim also desired to “overcome” the Jewishness that he consistently characterized as “weak” and “afflicted.”

It could be argued that Bettelheim attempted to “survive better” by “surviving whiter.” As will be explored later, Bettelheim would go on to construct his Orthogenic school as a model white Christian home, with Bettelheim as the patriarch. This was perhaps in part a personal effort to rectify a Jewishness that, as Boyarin, Itzkovitz and Pellegrini write, was categorically “outsider to the order of the middle-class family” (2003, 13).

Similarly, I surmise that Bettelheim's analogy of the “students” at the Orthogenic school to Jews interned in concentration camps – and project of deliverance -through-conversation (familial and personal) – also implies that Bettelheim's version of survival requires a move towards whiteness. The possibility for Bettelheim's acceptance into whiteness was predicated on a number of specific social phenomena at play in the United States in the post-WWII world. This, however, is a topic for later.

Bettelheim entered the United States at a crucial time for Jewish identity. The era

following WWII began the inauguration of Jews into middle class American life, and also marked the beginning of a “culturalist, white ethnic” movement which worked to the advantage of Jewish immigrants. Jeffery Decker notes this historical period as the time when the “syntax” of American nationalism altered, “transforming the location of America’s myth of origins from Plymouth Rock to Ellis island while shifting the nations master narrative from the melting pot model to a pluralist paradigm” (2006, 1240).

Bettelheim arrived in the United States as a psychologist – or prepared to pass himself off as one - in the midst of a shift in the technologies of psychiatric pathologization. The institutions of psychiatry had already been established with a long history of a structural racism that shaped the lives of people of color – specifically African Americans – in remarkably different ways than Jews, even when Jews were still functionally discursively Othered. In “Imperialism, Racism and Psychiatry,” Suman Fernando writes:

in the nineteenth century, psychiatrists in the US argued for the retention of slavery, quoting statistics allegedly showing that mental illness was more often reported among freed slaves compared to those who were still in slavery (2000, 88)

He continues,

Throughout the first half of this century, the apparent rarity of depression among African-Americans and Africans was attributed to their 'irresponsible' or 'unthinking' nature (Green 1914) or the 'absence of a sense of responsibility' (Carothers, 1953) in their character. In the 1920s, Carl Jung postulated that the 'Negro' 'has probably a whole historic layer less' in the brain (compared of course to white people) (2000, 81)

Indeed, it is important to note that what Fernando calls the “basic and fundamental racism of psychiatry” manifested throughout the 20th century in different ways on North American Jews than on African-Americans and other visibly racialized people (2000, 83). However, Jews had been subject to similar processes, albeit, I would hazard, in less extreme forms, of pathologization and demonization through the technologies of medicalization and psychiatry. Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell draw an interesting distinction between the pathologization of Jews and the

racialization of madness in black and otherwise visibly marked people of color that it might be worth visiting, if only briefly. What they outline has interesting implications for tracking the shift in North American Jewish identity, through complicity in eugenic logics, from pathologization to assimilation.

Snyder and Mitchell write:

Race scholars such as Mosse (2000) and Frederickson (2002) have argued that the European race hatred towards Jews develops from a belief in Jewish efforts to stubbornly retain racial purity as a culture. While blacks remained 'in their primitive state' (Mosse 2000, 201), Jews were feared to excel beyond the capacity of most Caucasian groups in modernity through their alignment in an anti-Semitic mindset with the newly reigning principles of 'economic and monetary values' (Mosse 2000, 198). Thus, what Bauman (2001b) characterizes as the 'pre-modern character of racism' becomes clear: a fear of modernizations demands on members of the dominant culture can be articulate with respect to another group's seeming lack of caution or inhibition in regard to them... While the 'darker races' were viewed as insufficiently modern because of incapacities attributed directly to their racial makeup, Jewish peoples became despised as an adept intermediary between white and black. (2006, 201)

They continue,

This interstitial position associated with Jewishness itself stemmed from arguments about some presumably innate lack of geographical and nationalist loyalties. While Jewish people, according to European racial science, shared common physiognomic and physical traits, they rejected an allegiance to the nation in favor of pure lines of filiation and religious communities: 'no matter how many great achievements the Jews were responsible for, they could not be absorbed into the European nations; they were not allowed to put down roots and so they were dismissed as rootless' (Adorno and Horkheimer 2000, 208). In other words, this imposed nomadic tendency of Jewish populations was misrecognized by even the most ardent proponents of racial purity in Europe as a quality that made Jews too 'pure' – a hereditary predisposition that made them non-assimilable. (2006, 201)

Snyder and Mitchell's clear and incisive account of the particularly constituted pathologization of Jews is fascinating in the context of Bettelheim's life because it seems that, nearly simultaneous to his arrival, situations were shifting dramatically enough in the discourses of race and psychiatry in the US to enable Jewish assimilation through adopting and engaging in the very modernist tools that Jews were simultaneously “feared to excel in” and were actively oppressed by.

That is, when Bettelheim arrived in the United States, Jews within the medical and psychological professions were beginning to be fairly successful promotion of Jewish assimilation, often through contributions to and complicity in the very discourses that had been so deeply stigmatizing and violent. In “Jews and American Popular Psychology: Reconsidering the Protestant Paradigm of Popular Thought,” Andrew Heinze makes claims that, through the medium of American psychology, Jewish professionals moved from reinforcing their own pathologization to scripting new and innovative oppressions to write Jewishness into whiteness (2001).

According to Heinze, Jewish psychologists “wrote mid-class Americans a moral prescription that, if followed, would produce a social order that was 'good for the Jews' but also propitious for other outsiders seeking integration into American society” though the idiom of popular psychology (2001, 967). This “moral prescription” appears to be the promotion of total assimilation into white, colonial, heteronormative, gendered-sexist, ableist Christian models of power. That power was accessed through burgeoning, if (then) precarious, whiteness based on Ashkenazi Jewish skin coloration, and phenomenon whiteness-in-relief; in North America, Jews were often produced as white *when compared to* blacks, Latinos and other visibly racialized people, in a racist cultural effort to further marginalize people of color in “post slavery” North America. This was true both in shifting visual/discursive representations of Jewish identity and, as Karen Brodtkin notes in her seminal study How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America, in legal privileges suddenly extended to “ethnic”/white Euro males (Jews, Irish, Italians) and denied to people of color (1998).

Heinze moves from a list of Jewish psychological thinkers -Joseph Jastrow, the first recipient of an American PhD in psychology in 1886; Hugo Munsterberg, the principal founder of American applied psychology; Boris Sidis, Abraham Arden Brill and Isador Coriat who gained

notoriety between the 1910s and 1930s – to an assertion that Jewish psychologists in fact author (and thoroughly embodied) humanist, functionalist notion of subjectivity. In this philosophy, Jews are understood as the “universal human subject” *par excellence*.

Through extensive medical and ethnographic work, writers like Maurice Fishberg worked to prove “how quickly [Jews] assimilated once they were allowed into modern society.” Heinze writes,

Fishberg went so far as to suggest that Jews assimilated even more rapidly than 'so called Aryan' immigrants..who tended to preserve their native cultures. 'Perhaps because Jews have none of these national characteristics,' he speculated, 'they are more plastic and have a greater aptitude for adaptation to a new environment.'" (2001, 966)

This recalls Dyer's notion that there exists “conceptual closeness between Jewish and really white coloring,” (a reality, of course, only for certain Jews) which he contends, “has only sometimes worked to Jews’ advantage” (1997, 57). He continues “Adaptability could easily be viewed as the capacity to infiltrate, passing for gentile as a kind of corruption of whiteness. The uncertainty over their color means that at different times Jews may be fully assigned to one side or the other” (1997, 57). The precariousness of Jewish whiteness likely affected newly arrived Bettelheim profoundly.

In How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America, Karen Brodtkin locates the 1944 GI Bill as the key turning point for the possibility of Jewish identity under the mantle of whiteness, calling it “the biggest and best affirmative action program in the history of our nation...for Euro males” (1998, 27). It extended benefits such as low-interest home loans, educational tuition expenses and gentrifying incentive to “male, Euro-origin GIs,” many of whom were Jewish (1998, 38). This bill set in motion economic revitalization and the growth of a white-collar workforce, just as it simultaneously promoted urban renewal and suburban sprawl at the expense of low-income housing and accessible educational and employment opportunities for people of color and women.

In this same year, Bruno Bettelheim received his United States citizenship and became director of the Orthogenic School. In his twenty-nine years of leadership, Bruno Bettelheim profoundly changed the nature of the Orthogenic School, moving it, in line with popular trends, from a site of containment to a site of rehabilitation. In attempting to “straighten” children *towards* white Christianity, Bettelheim attempted to divorce himself from the remaining trappings of his Jewish identity, to embody the masculinity of the exalted citizen subject.

The Straightened School

In 1944, Bruno Bettelheim took over the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School, a residential treatment/educational facility on the University of Chicago campus (and formally connected to their department of psychology) designed for the rehabilitation of children and adolescents of “above-average” intelligence labeled “emotionally disturbed.”

The current “directors statement” on the Orthogenic School website claims the term “Orthogenic” translates as “true path” or direction. Before Bettelheim took over the school in 1944, the emphasis was placed more squarely on containment and quarantine, rather than on Orthogenic directional “straightening.” Under Bettelheim, the school began to live up to the mandate of its name. The impetus for Bettelheim in taking over directorship of a school with an inherently eugenic mandate – as a Jew, as a survivor, as an immigrant – seems fraught indeed.

As director of the Orthogenic School, Bettelheim changed enrollment policy. Whereas prior to 1944, it offered a residential program for children with epilepsy and various forms of cerebral palsy, Bettelheim insisted that “public institutions could handle such cases” (*Chicago* 1968). It is important to note that public schools weren't “mainstreamed” in the United States until the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975. In claiming that “public institutions could handle such cases,” Bettelheim was condemning the former students of the Orthogenic School to state institutions, group homes and hospitals. Bettelheim then began

recruiting what he called “young victims of extreme psychosis” (ibid), mostly focusing on children that he had diagnosed as “autistic.” By the end of 1947, the school was comprised of students Bettelheim had diagnosed with “delinquency (eighteen), feeble-mindedness or severe retardation (seven), behavior disorders of a schizophrenic nature (four), neurotic deafness (two) and an inability to read (two)” (Pollack 1998, 156).

In the construction of an opposition between “such cases as epilepsy, cerebral palsy” and “young victims of extreme psychosis,” Bettelheim helped to tacitly promote a eugenic logic of “unreformable” and “reformable” bodies. While the Orthogenic School was once a site of containment for people with visible embodied differences, Bettelheim's desire was to rehabilitate “the mind” towards normalcy in bodies that more clearly echoed the physiological appearance of the normate. Bettelheim's Orthogenic School became a space of effacement for already-invisible (“minded”) difference.

Under Bettelheim, the Orthogenic School adopted a “white only” policy which remained in place even after 1954's landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. Visibly racialized bodies were prohibited – Bettelheim claimed that children of color confuse and upset the white children and interfere with their recovery – and enrollment was mostly limited to middle-class “ethnic” whites (Irish Catholics, Italians, Jews). This racist segregation again indicates Bettelheim's limited notion of the “reformable” body, and shows his anxious investment in surrounding himself with whiteness. Bettelheim was expressly interested in attracting students from “good, high-class stock” (Pollack 1998, 186), whose university prospects were already established. Tuition in the 1940s ranged from \$8,000 to \$12,000 a year.

Bettelheim functionally purged the Orthogenic School of bodies he deemed “too unruly” (visibly physically disabled or racialized) to reform. He needed to enact the triumph of white (Christian) medicine over non-normativity. In doing so, he may have been attempting to deliver

himself from Jewish identity/disability.

Over the years, Bettelheim repeatedly reaffirmed that

his commitment to saving the children stemmed from his camp experience, from his anger at the idea of wasted lives, whether trapped behind metal or emotional barbed wire. He was determined to give the children a good life and hoped that by promoting their integration, he could promote his own, that by serving the living he could, as much as possible, meet his 'obligation to the dead.' (Pollack 1998, 142)

It might be worthwhile to wonder why Bettelheim claims “obligation” to people he felt “went to their death like lemmings.” Bettelheim categorized Jewish identity as an “affliction” and understood death in the camps as resultant from a lack of moral strength; he invested ink and breath in promoting his own “overcoming” narrative. Quoting Des Pres, Timothy Pytell suggests that Bettelheim demeaned his fellow Jewish prisoners by questioning their masculinity and capacity to resist. He writes,

Des Pres criticized the not-so-subtle suggestion of Bettelheim's thesis that infantilism equated to the absence of resistance. De Pres claimed, 'Bettelheim's argument comes down to this: 'manhood' requires dramatic self-confirmation, and in the camps this could only be achieved through some moment of open confrontation with death. Insofar as the struggle for life did not become overtly rebellious, prisoners were 'childlike' (2007, 653)

It seems clear, then, that Bettelheim's “obligation to the dead” requires that he become the “savior” of marginalized identities; rather, it seems that to properly deliver non-normative identities from the margins, he is obligated to enacting their conversion to white Christianity. In rehabilitating children he equated with Jews in the camps, it seems possible that Bettelheim hoped to complete the act of “overcoming” his Jewishness.

Bettelheim's central metaphor was that autistic/psychotic children were living in a facsimile of the camps created by their (lacking) parents. Bettelheim is perhaps most famous for his assertion that autism and psychosis were caused by a specific sort of inadequate parenting; his most lasting legacy has been to the study and treatment of autism. A pause to consider Bettelheim's theories of autism may prove relevant to uncovering Bettelheim's true impact.

Bettelheim's theories of autism – promoted most famously in his The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self (1972), but also in his practice at the Orthogenic School, as a child psychologist and in his pop-psychology column in *Ladies Home Journal* (1968-1973) – formed the basis of clinical thought and practice in the 60s and 70s. His theory was that autism is an extreme reaction to childhood trauma inflicted by the inadequate parenting. Specifically, Bettelheim promoted the thought that autism was a reaction to a cold “refrigerator mother” whose secret hatred of the feminine/procreative caused her to have a latent death wish for her child and emasculated, passive and “weak” father.

Richard Pollack recalls Freud's foundational diagnosis of his famous “hysteric” Dora as “afflicted with housewife psychosis,” and notes that this form of patriarchal theorizing was widely accepted in Bettelheim's time. He writes,

This sort of patronizing position, rarely buttressed by any evidence, would harden into received, thoughtful, sympathetic language of such experts as D.W. Winnicott, John Bowlby and Dr Spock...At the same time, a doctor at Harvard Medical School argued that having children deeply distressed women because it confirmed their femaleness, which they secretly abhorred; thus, they felt compelled to disown motherhood by destroying their offspring. He conceded that most mothers did not murder or even totally reject their children, but contended that death pervades the relationship...such mother-bashing grew in intensity after WWII and reflected 'a widespread anxiety that something was going wrong with America – or Americans.' (1998, 161)

The term “refrigerator mother” was first used by another Austrian Jewish immigrant: Leo Kanner. Kanner was the first professional child psychiatrist and his work, along with that of Hans Asperger, formed the foundations of clinical/therapeutic notions of autism. It behooves me to mention Hans Asperger's Austrian-Jewish identity– the implications of a seemingly uniquely Jewish participation in classificatory/medicalizing discourses of autism deserve more complete/complex study. Though Kanner and Asperger's work in the forties was foundational, it was Bettelheim's work that gained the most widespread popularity, and had the most detrimental impact. Also, it seems as if Bettelheim's work most directly engaged normative gendered and

racialized constructions to explain childhood autism.

Bettelheim's version of the “refrigerator mom” is a sort of white-femininity-gone awry; she exhibits the “rigidness in domestic arrangement and eating manners, privacy in relation to the bowels, abstinence or at any rate planning in relation to appetites” (Dyer 1997, 24) that Dyer notes as archetypally “white,” but appears to lack the crucial element of the “white spirit” which “organizes white flesh” (1997, 15). The “refrigerator mother” does not pass -- she has all of the outward attributes, but, in Bettelheim's understanding, lacks the crucial authentic element, “spirit.”

It seems apropos to wonder (though not to conclude) whether the “refrigerator mother” of Bettelheim's imagination – this whiteness-gone-awry – is herself a Jew. According to Boyarin, one stereotype of Jewish women (though, of course, not the only one) is the “phallic monster” (1997, xxii). The “refrigerator mother” of Bettelheim's work appears to be a sort of “phallic monster” herself – a failure of what Boyarin calls the “romantic” or “bourgeois” archetype of Christian white femininity. In direct opposition to Mary, the ultimate archetype of Christian/white femininity – the virgin mother, both chaste and fertile – the “Jewess” of anti-Semitic stereotype is both sexually charged/exotic and deeply “masculine.” Perhaps, the subtext – like the refrigerator mother of Bettelheim's myth – is that the Jewish woman has a latent death urge for her child – *she never wanted children and therefore fails at femininity.*

When considered alongside Bettelheim's personal history, there is also something decidedly Jewish about the archetype of the “risky” father in the “refrigerator mother”/ “weak father” equation. This conflation of narratives of Jewish masculinity with “psychosis-producing” family structure completes the identification of Bettelheim's students with Jews. Bettelheim's desire to “straighten” the children he had conflated with Jews emerges from a profound personal commitment to “straightening” his own Jewish identity to become a viable white person.

It seems important to note that “autism” diagnosis remains racialized and classed. The 2002 documentary “Refrigerator Mothers” outlines the “classic mold” of children diagnosed with autism as “white, upper-middle class and very, very bright.” According to a 2006 study, children of color are 2.6 times less likely than white children to receive an autism diagnosis (Mandell, et al 2007, 1795). A 2007 Newsday article notes the prevalence of the autism diagnosis in affluent, white communities (Hildebrand 2009). In many ways, this is connected to the social narrative of autism as a certain form of extreme intelligence/genius – more to the point, however, the whiteness of the autism diagnosis may, indeed, be deeply indebted to Bettelheim's work and his white-only policy.

In his book Historical Ontology, Ian Hacking describes the phenomenon of the identification “feedback loop.” As Snyder and Mitchell explain, this is a phenomenon in which “the label itself presupposed a 'type' of population that then prompts the efforts to refashion identities in response to the initial diagnostic parameters” (2006, 11). It describes a sort of tautology that self-replicates. Bettelheim was invested in creating “reformable” bodies. He created strict entrance rules for his Orthogenic School – the students had to be white, middle/upper-middle/upper class, academic achievers with “emotional problems.” He used “autism” as a unifying diagnosis which invented/reinforced commonality between his students, who, despite shared identity markers, had an incredibly diverse range of behaviors, contexts, and histories. In doing so, it is possible that Bettelheim solidified the notion of autism as a “reformable” and white diagnosis, which then invented more possibilities for white autistic subjectivity, and denied the possibilities for autism diagnoses – and, subsequently, access to specialized resources – for people of color.

Much of this investment in creating and maintaining white-specific diagnoses and subjectivities reformable *towards* whiteness seems to be located in Bettelheim's virulent anti-

Semitism. In The Creation of Dr. B. Richard Pollack recalls an incident in Bettelheim's public career:

In the late 1940s, Bettelheim revealed for the first time in public how uncomfortable he felt in his Jewish skin. He had come to speak on 'Anti-Semitism today' at Hillel House. The room was packed with Jewish students and faculty members eager to hear from this man who actually had been imprisoned by the Nazis and who had written 'Individuality and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations.' He astonished the gathering at the outset by asking: 'Anti-Semitism, whose fault is it?''Yours!' he shouted. 'Because you don't assimilate, it is your fault. If you assimilated, there would be no anti-Semitism. Why don't you assimilate?' (1998, 228)

Pollack continues:

At the end of his talk, the young [Eric] Schopler braved the machine-gun fire and raised his hand for clarification. He said that he understood Bettelheim's remarks to mean that Jews could end anti-Semitism if they relinquished their religious and ethnic interests and had their identifying noses altered. If that was the case, the what was the difference between the speaker and an anti-Semite. In red faced anger, Bettelheim shouted, 'I am only the doctor prescribing the cure.' (1998, 228)

If we understand Bettelheim's conflation of Jewishness and autism/psychosis, we might see the inherent “curability” of these invisible “afflictions” of the non-normate. These identities are understood as normal-plus-lack, where the lack represents the absence of proper whiteness/Christianity. According to Dyer, Jews *could have been* and perhaps *could still be* white/Christian if only they converted –“Christ was a Jew, but the Jews rejected him” (1997, 53). Thus, to cure this Jewishness/autism conflation, Bettelheim prescribed a healthy dose of a “civilizing” Christian home environment.

Bettelheim “pioneered” a neo-Freudian form of psychoanalytic practice called “milieu therapy.”³ Timothy Pytell posits that Bettelheim functionally “turned” his “concentration camp experiences into forms of psychotherapy” (2007, 656). The school was structured “in the reverse image of the camps.” For Bettelheim, this “reverse image” was an extreme manifestation of the

3 It is interesting to note that Richard Dyer understands the “frontier” as a white “drama.” He writes: “this is both a temporal and spatial concept, not only in the sense of being the period and the place of establishing presence, but also in suggesting a dynamic that enables progress, the onward and upward march of the human spirit through time, that keeps pressing ahead into new territory” (Dyer 33).

patriarchal Christian home.

Bettelheim's rehabilitative model was premised on Richard Pratt's educational prescription: "Transfer the savage-born infant to surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit" (Smith 2005, 36). No explicit therapy was practiced at the Orthogenic School. Rather, the "mad" bodies of "unruly" children were simply trapped in a configuration of the heteronormative, procreative, binary-gendered, white Protestant family which, with enough exposure, was understood to "cure" them of their deviance.

The Orthogenic School was structured like a home – "doors never locked, no bars on the windows...bedrooms burst with toys and stuffed animals" (*Chicago* 1968). He called his method a "total therapeutic milieu," where children "lived in a home that was plush by any standards for institutions." (Goleman 1990). As Bettelheim believed that madness was incubated by inappropriate parenting and enacted upon the children, his attempt to reverse the process (and thereby straighten the children) involved the creation of new, more viable parents in his staff. Bettelheim's staff was comprised entirely of "young, pliable, agreeable, passionate women" trained explicitly to become "instant mothers" (Pollack 1998, 148), human facsimiles of the concrete nude "super mother" that sprawled in the courtyard, recalling and subverting the lawn-statues of the Virgin Mary that dot suburban landscapes. Oddly, despite the gendered narrative of teaching as a profession, Bettelheim's staff are never referred to as "teachers."

Though the school did not allow many outright expressions of religious conviction, it did make use of the full scope of normative Christian white configurations of "proper" family life. As Richard Dyer notes, "many of the fundamentals of all levels of Western culture – the forms of parenting, especially motherhood, and sex – come to us from Christianity, whether or not we know the bible story or recognize the specific items of Christian iconography" (1997, 15). Thus, Bettelheim's "normal" American school-home life became a Christianizing project. Christmas,

the only holiday celebrated at the Orthogenic School, was a formidable affair – Bettelheim, who was known on most other days to dole out all manner of violent abuse (from spankings to outright beatings) dressed up as Santa Claus and personally doling out gifts to the children.

Bettelheim's Orthogenic School was rife with physical and psychological abuse, which was sometimes structured to effect violent separation of the child from their birth family. One former student called it “a dumping ground for young people who were 'different' in some way or, for whatever reason, didn't match their parents expectations” (Pollack 1998, 188). Bettelheim was known to slap and punch children. He would often tell his students that they were at the Orthogenic School because their parents “couldn't stand them” (Gottlieb 2007, 2). He called them “megalomaniacs” and “neurotics,” and forced them into uncomfortable or violent situations against their will. Children were expected to shower, naked, in front of the staff and one another throughout their stay, regardless of age or comfort level, and many of students and staff survived sexual and physical abuse. Jacqueline Sanders, who worked for Bettelheim for thirteen years and took over leadership of the Orthogenic School in 1973, is quoted as saying “we became abusers of abused children” (Pollack 1998, 209).

The “success” of Bettelheim's “milieu” was predicated on a complete removal of the child from their birth family. Under Bettelheim's leadership, the Orthogenic School was completely sealed – children were committed for a two year minimum, but encouraged to stay for the entirety of their elementary and high school years; parents and family members were not allowed contact of any form for long periods of time; parents were never allowed to visit their children at the school; few people were allowed into or out of the facility itself.

The privacy of the Orthogenic School was intended to protect it from any external forces which might interfere with the retraining of the children. Bettelheim's intention was to create an entirely new environment for children to grow up in. Bettelheim's obsession with fracturing

children specifically from their mother, in light of his personal history, seems to take an anti-Semitic tone. In Bettelheim's philosophy, the specter of monstrosity associated with disability was displaced from the child to the mother. With the “blood logic” matrilineal transmission of Jewishness, and the association of Jewishness and madness, it seems possible that the intention of displacing madness from the child to the mother is the effect of a concurrent displacement of racialized Jewishness from child to mother. “Refrigerator mothers” (and weak Jewish fathers) invented both psychosis and Jewishness in their children. Like Jewish identity, Bettelheim understood autism/psychosis to have the an “accident of birth” quality favoring “descent over consent” (Glenn 2002, 152). The school was practiced rehabilitation in two steps – removal from the family line (quarantine) and retraining into white Christianity (rehabilitation). In removing the child from their blood family, and “curing” them, Bettelheim seems to be attempting to find a way to remove (his own) personal identity from (his own) heritage (as Jewish).

Bettelheim deemed his students “cured” once they had learned to appropriately function within his family structure, and they expressed what he deemed to be “healthy” desires for normative life. The most essential of these desires was higher education. This emphasis on college-level education as the mark of a “cured” student aligned with simultaneous “whitening” of North American Jews through educational opportunities and white collar employment from the 1940s on. As Irish Catholics, Jews and other “ethnic” white people advocated for a more “inclusive version of whiteness” (Brodkin 1998, 36), Bettelheim – who had notoriously prescribed total assimilation as the “cure” for Jewishness, as well as madness (identities which were still inherently linked) – measured his success by determining how well his students were able to gain access to dominant power structures. As these power structures opened to newly “whitened” identities, they remained decidedly closed to visibly racialized and disabled people.

Conclusion

It is March 2009 and I am in Chicago. I am at my Grandmother's house, my jeans squeaking on the plastic zip covers on the couch. The place is a cacophony of wild patterns in under wraps – gold wallpaper silenced by the stern gravity of black and white photographs, brilliant green couch cushions encased in plastic, glass cabinets with vibrant novelty “fine china.” My grandmother and I are fighting quietly; I am so angry at her, but I am not sure this anger is mine. In my backpack, I have thirty pages of letters from Larry, between 1974 and 1976, from the Orthogenic School. They are all urgency and repetition, buzzing anger and apology, a sort of GET ME OUT OF HERE written a thousand different ways in increasingly minute handwriting. My grandmother keeps telling me about “so-called Dr. Bettelheim,” and then saying things like “I suppose you think I'm cold. But I'm a mensch.”

My grandmother hates Bettelheim – is sure that Oscar, her deceased husband, whom she calls “a sick man” was responsible for Larry's stay there. It has always seemed, to me at least, that she hates me, too; or, rather, that I do not matter to her, which, in the context of family, is tantamount to hate. As far as I'm concerned.

Looking at Bettelheim's heteropatriarchal stereotypes – so anti-Semitic, so racist – it is hard to also admit that I find my grandmother cold. That my aunt wonders if her mother, my grandmother, was even capable of nurturing, of giving love. That I wonder, often, if she ever really wanted to have children. In an era when it was a mandate, especially for class-climbing Jews – to perform the heterosexual procreative urge, did she have much of a choice anyway? And who am I to say? In the face of all this ghostly presence, it is hard to contend with how the women in my family – my mother, grandmother, and aunt – all remark on Oscar's “tragic sensitivity.” How intellectual, gentle, feminized he was. I do not know what to do with these discourses – the talk of my family, my own talk – that hover just above Bettelheim's race-making diagnoses.

I will do the interview. I will finish the interview. I will not wonder – at least not too much – about whether or not I should “come out” as queer to my family, I mean, since I came all the way out here. I will not entertain the fears that I am somehow doing an injustice to everyone, not making a proper enough memorial to Larry in my writing, in my thoughts. I will not wonder whether my gendered expression, my very queerness, is in part a tactic of removal – from the women-talk, the intense motherhood-anxiety, the admonishment of failed masculinity that I see etched into my mother's speech, into my grandmother's, into Trudy's. At least not yet.

Queerness is, of course, at stake here. My queerness, Jewish queerness; my masculinity, Jewish masculinity. I recall Daniel Boyarin's assertion - “heterosexuality is a peculiar institution of contemporary Euro-American culture,” and that “homophobia is not an accidental or facultative adjunct of heterosexuality but its enabling condition” (1997, 15). My sanity, too – fiction that it is – is at stake. My very identity is, as it always is. As it always is with family.

I would argue that Bettelheim's sequestered practice at the Orthogenic School was a process of removal – of his students from their communities/families/social locations and re-population. He sought to add to the pool of mainstream white citizenship with their assimilated identities and, in doing so, to better assimilate himself.

To what critique might we subject Bettelheim? How might we make him/his character accountable for his violent legacy? Is assimilating a physical body (with a history) into a national body (with a history) necessarily a eugenic practice? How do we maintain an investment in personal accountability within systemic critique, while recognizing the complex tapestry of marginality and privilege that marks all human life? Where do we locate Bettelheim's Jewishness in his access to power?

And how can I find myself in all of this?

**EXTENDING OUR LI(V)ES
AS IF THEY WERE OUR OWN**

Chapter Three: What We Have Come to Know

What We Talk About When We Talk About Larry

Truthfulness has a history
-Ian Hacking, "Truth and Truthfulness"

When I was young and bored, I begged for stories. This is probably what they call "normal." The circumstances, however, weren't. My family spent little time together as a unit – my mom and dad worked strange and long hours, and my brother and I had a parade of babysitters and Au Pairs. Twice or three times a year, however, we all piled into the car – or, sometimes, onto the train – and sat together in total stillness for 48 straight hours. We were a family of marathon transit. Before their divorce, I would hazard that my mother and father spent five hundred or so hours sitting stationary next to each other in the front seat; or, rather, sitting stationary and simultaneously careening ever-forwards at 60 or 70 mph. To pass the time, I asked for stories.

My mother spun us a strange verbal quilt of associations, stitching popular culture to personal recollection. We heard partial plot lines for episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, sketchy summaries of current films – sometimes my dad would even chime in by singing an old commercial jingle. My favorite kinds of stories, though, were "Karen Stories." These were tales my mother told of her childhood in Chicago – all orange factory dust and lake run-off; a close-knit neighborhood and requisite childhood gore (bloodied knees, knocked elbows). They were called "Karen Stories" because they prominently featured my mother's best friend Karen, whose house was dense with Catholic paraphernalia and with guts (the metaphorical kind - "balls," if you will) of steel. Karen was always getting into some sort of *trouble*, from a locked high school attic pried open to a skating rink snuck into in the middle of the night. These stories were exciting

because they described a kind of adventurous mid-western childhood I could never have imagined in the controlled environment of my New York basement apartment. They were exciting because they introduced an impossible character; my mother as a child, my mother *before me*.

A few years ago, in a haze of vicarious nostalgic driving through the streets of Chicago, I repeated a “Karen Story” back to my mom. I’m sure I said something both loaded and flip - “isn’t that where you got stuck all night in a room with a wild bat?” or “is that the lake where all the fish washed up dead? I don’t have any stories like that from my own life.” She turned to me with innocent awe, and, after twenty-some years of believing, she let me in on a secret ambivalence. Most of the “Karen Stories,” she said, were not quite *true* – in fact, many of them were total invention. Those that weren’t were full of a sort of mis-remembering, an embellishment that made it impossible for her to figure out *what had really happened* and *when*.

Don’t misunderstand; I’m not angry or upset. I was never really convinced by the idea of “truth” to begin with. But I was – and am – curious: what seems interesting now is both how outright aware my mother was of the process, and how clearly it seems that her invention has replaced or become “legitimate” recollection. *And don’t we make ourselves (up) as we make ourselves stories?*

If, as Susanne Gannon writes, “writing is a technology for the production of particular subjects, particularly the self-writing,” then telling stories produces the characters in them (2006, 478). When we tell stories about ourselves, we create the self-telling. In telling stories of a partially imaginary childhood-self (and childhood-Karen), my mother invented, with some degree of intention, a narrative position for herself in the present that became My Mother – the one I knew. I understood my childhood in relief to hers, my current self in relief to her self-narrating. In admitting her awareness of this to me, my mother became doubled – she remains The Mother That I Knew (the adult version of the child version of herself) and My Mother, Inventing The

Mother That I Knew (the adult inventing the adult version of herself by inventing the child version of herself).

It is difficult (I would hazard impossible, but I don't *know*) to determine the boundaries of invention. Or, put another way, there are infinite versions of history and they are all invention. They are not, however, invention in a vacuum - the multiple versions of the “truth” (that universal category that means nothing in-and-of-itself but speaks loudly of and about those who use it) all speak in the voice of the narratives and myths that we have been born into, the discourses that we are made up by, that we are making, and that we perpetuate. If there is a difference between *the fact of the matter* and *the telling of the fact of the matter*, it is so minute and imperceptible, so illegible to me that it is not worth discussing.

Every story is just that – a story. This is not to say that every telling of a story is equally fair, just or useful. Quite the contrary, in fact; the dominant discourses through which we remember our stories and ourselves require the active erasure of certain marginalized identities, perspectives and bodies. Our stories are dictated by and make manifest the dominant racist, classist, homo-and-transphobic, heteropatriarchal, ableist (etc) discourses determined by the post-enlightenment, neo-liberal, colonial nation state in which we live. They are haunted by all of the voices and stories which they erase. They are sometimes shot through with the first inklings of our own resistance, or accountability.

In the introduction to Race and the Subject of Masculinities, Harry Stecopoulos and Michael Uebel write, “you are constituted by what you do (and have done) and how you are interpreted doing what you do (and have done)” (1997, 9). I would add to this that you are also constituted – especially to your relatives, your grand/children, those who follow you – by the way you have made meaning of what you do (and have done) and what you say about how you have been interpreted doing what you do (and have done). You make yourself through the telling of

your hi/stories; you speak loudly of the past and present in ways you do not and cannot fully interpret through telling your version of *the fact of the matter*.

This “EXTENSION” is a “Karen Story,” just as this chapter is. That is, it is a telling of history that is part “the fact of history” as my family remembers it and part the self-aware mis-remembering for the sake of *a good story*. The differentiation will not always be clear, even to me. Further, it is an attempt to see how these “facts” and intentions, these memories and mis-memories are themselves both constructing and subject to the whims of larger discourses of power and domination that we may or may not be aware of. It is a story of haunting, and a story of how we tell the story of haunting and, in telling that story, how we make a new haunting that we cannot fully perceive. Of course, “Karen Story” here is merely metaphor; Karen herself does not feature prominently (though she may be found hanging around the margins on occasion) and the stories I will enter and explore are not all told by my mother. Rather, they are the stories told by my mother, aunt and grandmother. But “Karen Stories” were always metaphor, discursive stand-ins for direct access to the “actual” how of *what happened*, as language itself is always metaphor. All these stories told by my family, and stories about how my family tells stories make a story about me, just as, through entering and interpreting them, I make a story about me.

Much of this “EXTENSION” – and this chapter – is the story of how we make our fear and pain into a story; as a result, there is much pain and much fear contained in this writing. This is not to say that stories we tell – and the things we tell stories about – are not also full of joy and vitality. They are, as we are. This section, however, focuses more deeply on the pain, because it is what we seem to remember most clearly, most frequently. This is the section that my mother has been most afraid of – and for good reason. I will be performing a site-specific discourse analysis on the stories she tells – and the stories that my grandmother tells, that my aunt tells – to reveal the larger narratives at play in our memories.

This is incredibly risky stuff, and I feel very ambivalent about it. In some ways, I am telling a story that is simply not mine; the story of my mother's childhood, the story of my aunt's adolescence, my grandmother's marriage, and my uncle's life. Though their lives made way for me, these are not *my stories*. And yet, through some strange turn of events, I have decided to learn them – in my way – and analyze them. In some ways, this feels like a violation; in others, a tribute. In speaking these stories back into the world in my own voice, I am being both generous and tremendously selfish. *Thank you and I'm sorry.*

Though, or perhaps *because*, I will be analyzing and interpreting these stories that have been told, my vantage point gives me no “better” access to anything “real.” In fact, all my analysis will likely do is tacitly construct a complex story about how I have been made to interpret how I have been made. As I speak about how my family remembers painful things about our lives, I will be revealing how my own interpretation of erasures in the stories of my family is predicated on those erasures, and, likely, other erasures that I do not currently have the tools myself to understand. This recognition/admission does not absolve me of the responsibility to (now or, at least, someday) find and be accountable to those erasures, but might at least make manifest an orientation towards Derrida's “hospitable narcissism,” a self-reflectiveness “that is much more open to the experience of the other as other” (1995, 199)

In “Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives,” Carolyn Ellis imagines furnishing potential students with advice on how to conduct ethnographic research with what she calls “intimate others” through an “ethics of care.” She imagines the following conversation between herself and her future students as follows:

“But what about those who kept secrets from me, who hurt me?” they ask, and I reply, “Write to understand how they put their worlds together, how you can be a survivor of the world they thrust upon you.” (2007, 28)

In some ways, the secrets and the hurt that Carolyn Ellis imagines in the stories of her

researchers are crucial components of this “EXTENSION”. Just as there are secrets in every family (or so I assume), there are secrets in mine; just as there is pain in every family, there will be pain in this exploration of my family stories. But intentionally obscured facts and real tangible wounds are not, actually, what I am concerned with here. The “secrets” that I wish to encounter and explore are not the active secrets one *knows* and *keeps* but the *secret* secrets – the secrets about whiteness and Jewish identity, about madness and respectability, about masculinity and failure that my family has been transmitting quietly, without their/our knowledge, the secret ways in which dominant discourses, pressure and orientations have shaped their/our actions and pressed themselves into the ways they/we tell their/our stories.

The pain that I am most interested in tracking in this “EXTENSION” is not my own, though that is, of course, always present. It is also not the pain of my mother, aunt or grandmother, though they, too, are present and will make themselves manifest. The pain I am interested in entering and thinking through is the pain that is invented, maintained, remembered and spoken about – the pain that gets ascribed to my uncle Larry and my grandfather Oscar, the pain that manifests in memories about them in ways that may not be immediately apparent to my family members as they remember.

Both Oscar and Larry lived in positions of marginality that were shaped by their landscape – socio-political, national, and familial. They both experienced pain related to (but, of course, not limited to) this marginality. Despite this, it is not *Larry's pain* or *Oscar's pain* as such that I am writing through or towards, if only because I cannot really provide a platform to it. No matter how many papers of theirs I might read, they, themselves, are not accessible to me in the same way that my grandmother, mother and aunt are. This is resultant from – but, again, not limited to – the fact that they are no longer around on the planet. It bears noting that even when they were alive, they were somewhat inaccessible to me – Oscar because, as I recall it, our

relationship was mediated through distance, the strangeness of Chicago, and the ever-present influence of my grandmother. Larry, too, felt alienated from my life, because of his extreme isolation and investment in privacy and control. Determining which aspects of Larry's isolation were "his design" and which were resultant from rampant systemic ableism seems an impossible task, as is trying to understand *his pain* on *his terms*. What I am interested in is the kind of absence and loss that Oscar and Larry represented in my life and the lives of my family and how Larry and Oscar's pain *gets spoken* by my aunt, mother and grandmother.

I am interested in all of this because I believe that how my mother, aunt and grandmother speak about Larry and Oscar has a great deal to say about how madness and Jewishness get made in the world, and, related, how respectability and whiteness emerged as a possibility for Jews in North America over the course of the last century. They have a great deal of power to explain the particularities of the world which was "thrust upon" them, just as their stories might reveal how we/they have been agents of the particular kind of "thrusting" that resulted in my position of privilege, both relative to Larry and to the majority of the current world. This "EXTENSION" is a sort of complex character study, in that it deals with a number of characters that are related. It attempts to *make a relation* between these characters and then *make meaning of that relation*. The characters are not all human beings, nor are they all explicitly present all at once.

Loosely understood, this "EXTENSION" is a study of Larry and Oscar and how my mother, aunt and grandmother remember them. It is told, predominantly, through the memories of one particular and extremely important year – 1968. Just as this year figures prominently in my family's memory, and in the larger narratives of the 20th century, it has figured prominently in my life and understanding of myself, long before I became interested in my family history. Strangely, this loaded year – 1968 – functions as both a grounding site – the lens through which I am attempting to apprehend and comprehend the stories of my family – and a character of its own

right. In some ways, this chapter is a character study of Larry, Oscar and the figure of 1968. There are, however, more major players than that.

Understanding how my family remembers Oscar, Larry and 1968 requires that we also encounter race, Jewish identity and madness as both organizing logics and characters in their own right. These notions and processes – the idea of race and the *making of it*; the idea of madness and the *making of it* – are essential to understanding not simply *why* we remember Larry and Oscar the way we do, but *how it is* we are remembering them.

Another crucial character in this study is, of course, me. I will only be marginally present as an explicit force in this “EXTENSION” (depending on how you read it), but I am a crucial haunting and, therefore, an essential character in this study. I provide the organizing framework – you are, after all, reading *my* words. Also, it is important to remember that all this remembering endeavors to articulate, through the telling and re-telling of these old family/social stories, some of the grounds of possibility for my identity. In doing so, I hope to eventually encounter *how I was made to be*, but also *how I am currently making myself explicable as having been made*. This section is, of course, a sort of personal genealogy, looking to take the personal, interior, emotive stories told by my family and fit them into larger discursive structures to look for a sort of road map to the making of me. This sort of genealogy is intended as a *genealogy of a problem* (the problem of having been made a subject, and made to encounter my ways of being made subject in historically contingent ways) rather than a *genealogy in search of a solution*. This is what Nikolas Rose calls “a genealogy of subjectification.” He writes:

A genealogy of subjectification takes this individualized, interiorized, totalized and psychologized understanding of what it is to be a human as delineating the site of an historical problem, not providing grounds for historical narrative. Such a genealogy works towards an account of the ways in which the modern 'regime of the self' emerges....to write such a genealogy is to seek to unpick the ways in which 'the self' that functions as a regulatory ideal in so many aspects of contemporary forms of life – not merely in our passional relations with one another, but in our life planning, our ways of managing industrial and other organizations, our systems of consumption, many of our

genres in literature and aesthetic production – is a kind of 'irreal' plan of projection, put together somewhat contingently and haphazardly at the intersection of a range of distinct histories – of forms of thought, techniques of regulation, problems of organization and so forth. (1996, 129)

As a character study and a study of *relation*, this “EXTENSION” attempts to reach beyond the limits of what can be articulated. Ultimately, this is a failing project, but, hopefully, revealing in its failure. The attempt is towards what Ella Shohat calls “a polyrhythmic staging of a full-throated counterpoint where tensions are left unresolved” (1998, 2). Though it must be approached procedurally, step-by-step - language is uncomfortably linear and casual that way – it is not intended to be understood that way. The beginning and end of the chapter are merely convenient entry and cut-off points – they do not represent any sort of resolution. The characters, too, are intended to be understood as a rhizome, in Deleuze and Guattari's sense: all of the characters which this chapter intends to address are implicated in the construction and maintenance of each other simultaneously. It attempts to encounter these characters as “an assemblage, a multiplicity” (1987, 4). I see myself – the writing-me, anyway - as both a node in the rhizome and the point of encounter (organizing structure, perhaps) of the rhizome.

Thus, for no reason other than that it *seems to make sense to me*, this “EXTENSION” will proceed as follows: this chapter, Chapter Three, I will attempt to introduce Larry and my grandfather by telling a number of stories. These stories, themselves, are divided into two sections, namely “facts in story-clothing” and “stories in fact-clothing.” “Facts in story-clothing,” the first set of stories, are “mine” - my memory of Larry's life. I tell them first to make myself visible and transparent – to remind you this inquiry, really, is written on the landscape of *me*. The second set of stories - “stories in fact-clothing” - are the stories my mother, grandmother and aunt tell; stories about their lives, stories about Oscar, stories about Larry.

It is important to note that in this second section of “What We Talk About When We Talk About Larry,” I will be reassembling the story of Larry's life by excerpting, sometimes at great

length, interviews I conducted with my family members. Much of the content is alarming, unsettling, and told in a manner that I find myself compelled by and deeply worried about. Further, the fact that I have the narrative power here to excerpt, juxtapose and frame the words of my family members, and, in doing so, reassemble my version of the events of their lives, is deeply troubling. Many of the ways that my family has of talking about Larry and Oscar – and, in particular, about the discourses of madness so deeply etched into their identity – result from dominant narratives that I find to be profoundly problematic, ableist and oppressive; further, though, the fact that I am in the position to excerpt, juxtapose and frame the stories my family tells about their lives is a result of dominant narratives that are profoundly problematic, ableist, and oppressive. For these reasons, and more, I find it essential to encounter these stories as much *on their own terms* as possible. Towards that end, in the section “stories in fact-clothing” of “What We Talk About When We Talk About Larry,” I will be providing little to no historical context, save what my family explicitly mentions or makes clear. By doing this, I hope, in fact, to achieve greater understanding of how their ways of speaking the past – indebted to and inventing larger discourses of oppression/oppressive discourses - are inherent and essential even to my attempt to unpack them by giving them a great deal of space, as it were, in the text.

It is important to acknowledge – I am tempted to say “admit” - that, as my ability to analyze is, in many ways, predicated on my very indebtedness to the narratives that I seek to unpack, there will be much that I miss, pass over, or cannot fully explain. There will be moments of tension that are left unresolved, elements of pain or strife that go completely unaddressed, things that the reader might find in my mother's, aunt's or grandmother's words that I simply cannot see, if only because I am looking at my relation to my own relations. This, it seems to me, is reason enough to give Sho, Trudy and Ruth ample space, if only in quotation, to speak.

Facts in Story-clothing.

Whole sections of my childhood are on loan to West Fargo Street, on the North Side of Chicago, where my grandmother still lives. My stories of Larry struggle their way through lint and non-linearity, clawing up from the sides of the road on the two-day long drive from Manhattan to my mom's adolescence. Whenever we visited Chicago, it felt like going home to find out that you never had a home to begin with. Chicago was a home as unfamiliar, daunting and oblique as a half-remembered dream. Chicago was a museum. The streets in Chicago were wide enough to feel lost walking from one building – one door – to the next. Chicago was the surface of the moon.

I think that I always assumed that Chicago was Superman's Metropolis even though I think (I know) all comic books – and, sure, all urban future dreamscapes and dystopias – are about New York. I think that when I learned about Superman's double life – his tenure as the Daily Planet's Clark Kent – I replaced it with the Chicago Tribune, and his secret identity with my mother's years at the Chicago Tribune. We all have a mythic past to contend with.

My relationship to Larry was mostly myth – myth and mail. He wrote me missives disguised as birthday cards, and affectionate notes on major Jewish holidays. Though he would often call on the telephone, it was always too urgent, I never wanted to talk. "I know your mother is there, she's just ignoring me," he would say. "The world is ending, are you following the election?," he would say. I rarely wanted to talk – or, when I did, he didn't.

His letters, though, were different – considered, careful, strangely formal. He would tell me he'd heard of what I was doing – theatre or "Food Not Bombs" or studying Jean Genet – and that he was proud. On more than one occasion, I think he called me "the future." I think he meant it.

After his death, I learned so many things about Larry. He was vegan; I was vegan. He

held radical politics, was anti-capitalist, had a cogent critique of the medical model. He was invested in both careful thought and profound generosity, kindness. I never knew him well enough to hear these things from him. Not really.

In my memory, Larry is always in conversation with the creature of Chicago. They are both – Larry and the city – fully animated; enormous creatures, constantly arguing. I know them only in moments, at strange angles; I know them only together.

The first time I met Larry must have been at the wedding of Trudy, my aunt, and Henry, my uncle. Andrew was sick in the car; I was a flower girl. Andrew was always sick in the car, but I was rarely a flower girl. I had a scab as big as my little fist, and I was told not to pick it. I watched my grandfather play clarinet. I know this is true, but I do not remember it. I know it is true because I watched the video.

My first memory of Larry is actually a memory of my brother, Andrew. He used to vomit in the parking lot, a lot. It was a ritual of masculinity – a cocooning or a pissing of the bed. Someday, my father's hands and proto-cell phone belt seemed to say, he shall overcome. "Someday, you know, your brother will be bigger than you. Then you'll think twice about picking on him" The parking lot vomit, motion sickness, perennial ear infection – all these things allowed him time with my father. Front-seat-of-the-car-time, reassuring physical touch. My body seemed to chase that away. I rarely puked, anyway.

I don't know why we kept going to Sizzler. All you can eat is always more than you actually can. But Chicago was mostly food and elevated trains, and vacationing meant time-away from the ever present, ever quieted diet of my mother. Chicago was safely sequestered away from Zabar's takeout. In Chicago, we could eat whatever we wanted. We wanted Sizzler. They had corndogs. In our house of fish sticks, fruit leathers and seasonal hamentashen, the promise of fried food and sprinkles were worth it. Even, or perhaps because of, the eventual vomiting.

We went to Sizzler to meet him. I had already memorized the soundtrack to *Les Misérables*, so I must have been eight. One year earlier, I had jumped on a couch at my half-goyish cousin's house through my grandfather's funeral, barred from sitting shivah by youth and already-apparent tendency towards morbid unhappiness.

We couldn't meet him at his apartment – our mother told us that he didn't want anyone to know where he lived. He called our house from payphones on phone cards, afraid of the imminent trace. So we met somewhere public, somewhere under the watchful and benevolent eyes of Jell-O molds and multicolored sprinkles. We went to Sizzler. We took the El to get there. We met at a street corner. My father stayed at home.

I was groomed for our meeting. Larry is very smart, I was told. You are very smart, I was told. "You'll really like him."

The first time, I met Larry, I remember thinking, "he looks like he doesn't have a home." His hair made me uncomfortable – it was matted and long. To this day, I feel guilt and shame about feeling and thinking these things – angry at my eight year old me. My mother had a class climb in her recent past; had eyes fixed squarely forward. She carried granola bars around in her purse, a sign of the triumph of paternalistic colonialism that dances around in the pants of benevolence. "If you give out money, people will buy drugs – carry food instead."

When I met Larry, I remember thinking, "I wonder how much he knows about the stars." I thought about death a lot then; death and astral bodies. Mostly, I remember the ice cream, and how my brother vomited in the parking lot. How my mother asked later if we felt awkward. I remember how awkward I felt.

The next day – or maybe the next visit, the next year - we went to UNO'S with Trudy and Henry. We were always going to UNO'S. It is where we went after Sizzler – where we went thirteen years later, after a family reunion. It is where we went after Larry died.

I have many short stories of Larry. They are my stories of Chicago. One time, my mother took us all to the planetarium. It might've been the Air and Space Museum. Or the Museum of Science and Industry. Leonard Nimoy narrated something, and I was delighted. Larry and I talked about the edge of space, and the nature of time. To date, it was my favorite conversation with him. It was dark inside the museum and very bright outside. He was wearing something blue, and I felt that we were the same. I must've been older. I knew about quantum physics. Or, at least, I knew the phrase - "quantum physics."

The last time I saw Larry, he was complaining about his feet. It was the summer of 2006 and I was passing through on my first tour. Our new Canadian friend had joined us for a few shows, and was politely listening to my grandmother sing. My aunt had thrown together an impromptu backyard show, next to the swing set where her blond stepdaughter and I used to play "Olympic Jump," back before I even knew what the Olympics were, what they did. He was worried they would have to amputate his feet. He was critiquing the Bush administration with my brother when we left for the night. Andrew, I remember, remarked on how good their conversation was. "Larry is amazing."

My aunt says that the last time she saw him, she begged him to go to the hospital, but he hated hospitals. She dropped him off a few blocks from home, at his request, and watched him walk away through the snow. It was the winter that killed him, she would later say.

A year earlier, at our family reunion, he had brought many things in zip lock bags. Food to eat, books, combs. He came on the arm of my grandmother. I always thought she didn't like me; still think it. Sometimes, though, she still sends me teaching manuals from the 1950s and silk scarves she no longer wants. When I was a teenage punk, I used to love her old clothing. Now, I imagine it on other people and smile. It's all too femme for me.

The day they found Larry's body, my grandmother didn't want to cancel her date. When

we came to Chicago to make memorial, make amends, make arrangements, I yelled at her in a diner. Then, my mother and I went to the bathroom and hugged. Everyone in my family understands their class status through their personal obligations. To whom they are indebted, who they owe to. I'm pretty sure my grandmother is rich now, but I'm not sure what that means. I have a laptop, and a heavy heart and this terrifying research project.

Stories in fact-clothing.

Let me talk to through how they might talk you through it so we can get to how I might talk you through how they talk you through it to find how I might talk. Elizabeth Grosz writes that “the future is the domain of what endures” (2003, 16). If the stories of my past are the scaffolding of my “I”s – those that frame this inquiry – then my coming was not only expected, as Walter Benjamin might have it, but already partially articulated through the way my family imagined itself enduring. I have been searching for these foundations of myself – how my family imagines its own history and how that affected how it imagined itself enduring – in the stories we tell. Towards that end, I spent the past few months interviewing my aunt, mother and grandmother about their past, their present, and their imagined future.

Initially, I framed our conversations as investigations of Larry's life, because that's what I thought they were. But history has no single character, no discernible beginning or discrete plot-line. What I got, instead, were much broader narratives - stories of my family as we fit into the landscape of modernity. Because it is the closest I can come to direct access (a fiction in itself), I have made the following equation: to understand myself, I must understand how I am complicit in the production and maintenance of structures of both domination and marginality in the socio-political environment that makes me (and that I make). To understand my complicity in these structures, I must understand how my family talks and thinks about itself, and how that talking-and-thinking has led to me. I have chosen Larry's life as an access point to *the talking that makes*

me because his identity seems relevant to me. It's very seeming-relevant-to-me makes it relevant. To me.

What follows is a reconstruction of Larry's life (as it lays the groundwork for mine) through the stories my family tells. Though it is clear that I am, at every turn (of phrase), choosing quotations and stitching together stories, I intend to make very few interpretive remarks at the moment; this section is meant to lay the groundwork for later analysis, and therefore should proceed with as little of my direct analytic commentary as possible. This is both to give myself *something to come back to* and to *allow these voices to speak "for themselves" as much as possible* (recognizing the contradiction and paradox embedded in this statement, in this attempt). Of course, I will occasionally interject analysis, just as I will make and am making essential decisions as to what is quoted and how it is situated in relation to other quotes, other versions of the story. For as much as this is possible, though, I would like to treat this particular storytelling as a doorway; an entry-point to critique, to character relation, to interpretation.

One trouble with the telling of history is figuring out where it starts. For the sake of this inquiry, we will begin at a (but not "the") beginning.

Ruth Krol, my grandmother, was born in Chicago, the fourth daughter of Tobias and Rachel Krol. Ruth's parents, according to my mother, "came over from a part of Russia that has gone back and forth between being Poland and Russia." In my own mother's estimation, Rachel Krol was "very clearly identified with mental problems...She was a very cranky, high maintenance, difficult woman." My grandmother never speaks of her mother, but all her talk of Tobias is glowing and devoted.

Ruth's early life was marked with a combination of gendered trauma and anti-Semitic fervor. . When she was a young child, she was sexually assaulted by her next door neighbor's son, an incident that she recalls as "the beginning of my attitude towards males and towards marriage

and stuff like that.” I speak with in so flip a manner because I am at a loss for how to bear witness to it with appropriate horror, how to pay it appropriate respect – this is my failing, my lack of narrative tact or finesse, and I will take the fall. Certainly, Ruth has a sense of the heteropatriarchal mandate of “her time,” which she resisted, or so she seems to tacitly note, in the aftermath of this early trauma. It runs through her stories, from her description of her sister Madge as “independent – she didn't need to sleep with anyone to get by” to her self-description as a strong, independent survivor in a world of “sick” men. This mandate is what my aunt refers to as the sort of gendered “agreement” of the early-to-mid twentieth century. My aunt describes it as follows: “A man goes out and works, he's the breadwinner, and wifey stays home - she cooks, she cleans, she raises the kids – this is not a great place for a woman to be, but this was the sort of energy that was in the air.”

At the age of eight, in the midst of what she refers to as “depression, not recession” - her family moved to a farm in South Haven, Illinois. Ruth notes that Tobias, her father, “loved the farm because he was very good at agriculture.” As if he was farming for his own salvation, she notes that “his idea [for working on the farm] was to be good enough to go to Israel with his family.” It is unclear whether their move was precipitated by scandal over her assault, or was more financial in nature.

In South Haven, Ruth experienced virulent anti-Semitism. “I had terrible experiences on the farm,” she says, “pushed away because I was Jewish. Name calling and rock throwing.” When she was 16 years old, she moved back to Chicago, finished high school, and got a job as a secretary at Sears Roebuck, where she would work for the next 20 years of her life. She also met Oscar Treiman, her future husband and my grandfather, that year. They met at the Jewish People's institute, a community center in their predominantly Jewish neighborhood. She tells the story of their early romance with a strangely factual detachment:

I used to go to the Jewish People's Institute all the time, it was in a Jewish area. I met him there, I was playing piano, which I don't know how to play. And he sat and he listened to me and he said, 'oh, that's great!' and I said, 'do you know what it is?' and he knew what it was...

The performance of competence – in artistic production and financial security – as a sort of promise-that-cannot-be-kept figures prominently in my grandmother's story of her marriage to Oscar. She continues,

I thought he was a nice guy, he was nice looking. He was a musician, which I loved. He was a clarinet player, a very good one. And he asked me out for a date. And he took me to lunch...and I had a bunch of pennies, and I was going to pay for it. And he said, "oh no, Don't." And I said, "well, that's because I work at Sears Roebuck, you know, they don't pay a lot, but I like the world." Oscar – I believe he had just gotten out of the army. I'm not sure. And he – nice looking, intelligent, musician.

In her estimation, the marriage was somewhat abrupt. "We went out a few times," she says, "Then he asked me if I would want to get married, and I said 'I don't know.' Anyhow, we got married at the Gramyer hotel in Chicago and I paid for it. The whole thing."

My grandmother's abruptness, her matter-of-fact telling of what might be a romantic story emerges from her sense of having been "misled" or "lied to" about his past. My grandfather's history came to her somewhat slowly, in pieces over the next few decades.

According to my mother, Oscar Treiman came from a family of "poor intellectuals" from Chernigov, Russia. "They were well-educated and very observant in the old country," she says, "But when they came here, they really weren't terribly observant, just very apt to stick with other Jews."

Oscar and his younger brother Sam were born in Chicago to Abraham Treiman and Sarah Bard. According to my mother, Oscar's parents were "more into religion [than Ruth's]. They observed religion, saw it as more than cultural." She also notes that, in her understanding, they were more visibly marked as Jewish. She says, "they...looked a little different – they were darker, a little more traditional Jewish looking."

Like Ruth's family, Oscar's family is mostly recollected as "difficult." My mother says:

My grandfather was, apparently, quite mentally ill...People always described him as strange, distant, unfriendly. So, I'm not sure if it was mental illness, or..it could've been anything. It could've been discomfort with the language. But that was our understanding...He was very introspective and quiet, and, I'm going to say in quotes, “weird.” No one ever knew him, which is why I never knew anything about my heritage.

She continues:

Because his father was difficult, uncommunicative, etc, my dad was always asked to be the man of the house. My dad was very insecure, and a sensitive and creative person – he would've been a musician, if he had been able to. It always made him anxious to have that role. And so there was some innate resentment, because my dad had to make sure things were taken care of while his considerably younger brother was treated like the little prince, was encouraged to go to college, became very successful, all of that. But my dad was the one who was really close with his mother, and took care of her, helped her with money and everything, and when she died, from what I hear, he had a breakdown – he developed hysterical blindness. He had to leave the army.

While Oscar was serving in army, his mother, Sarah (Bard) Treiman got pregnant. As abortion was not legal in Illinois at the time (it was legalized in 1973 by the Roe vs. Wade case⁴), she was forced to turn to illegal, unsafe – and, in this case, deadly – abortion practitioners. She died of toxemia while Oscar was gearing up for duty, and it was in the aftermath of her death that he had what Ruth calls his “first breakdown.”

Oscar was never told the cause of his mother's death. My aunt explains it as follows:

My mom, she said he had a nervous breakdown before they were married. His mother died when he was in his early 20s, he might've been 21. Somehow, his extended family – who did him no favors – recognized that he was sort of fragile and emotional and, you know, his dad was kind of a meany and his mom was a nurturer and everyone knew he was a mama's boy and no one told him that his mom died of an illegal abortion..So what was even worse than that – if that's possible, that she died of an illegal abortion – was that she died at 44 and my father was away – he didn't go into combat, but he got into the army and was learning accounting down in Oklahoma...he got word that his mother had died and no one told him what killed her. They didn't think he could 'handle it.' So he walked around, wondering what had killed this vital 44 year old woman. So he started thinking – because he was already kind of a hypochondriac – that there was some terrible thing that was his makeup and that was probably going to kill him.

My grandmother tells it differently – as, I'm sure, it was told to her differently. She says:

4 It is worth noting that Illinois is one of seven US states that still have “trigger laws” on the books – that is, in the event of a constitutional overturn of Roe vs. Wade, and the subsequent state-determination of access to/legality of abortion, abortion would immediately become illegal in the state of Illinois

I said, “you know what, a lot of guys I know, they're still in the army – how'd you get out so fast?” and he said, “well, I made off I was sick.” And I said, “what do you mean?” and he said, “well, I wouldn't keep down any food.” I guess he did something to make him throw up. No so. But I didn't know that. So I was always looking for some of his papers to show how he got out of the army quickly. I knew guys and they were still in the army...what happened, what really happened, that I found out not until he had his *second* breakdown, was that he had a breakdown in the army.

In my mother's estimation, after Oscar and Ruth were married, “there were immediately problems.” “This is according to my mother,” she says, “because my father never talked about it, but she says that the problems stemmed from his hypochondria.” This is, indeed, how she describes it. Of their early marriage, Ruth says,

He started to work. He didn't make much. He was a hypochondriac. He had medicines and he would go to a doctor every month to see if his heart was still okay. The doctor kicked him out many times, saying “you're a healthy man, don't look for things. You are not sick.”

For years, they lived in Chicago, both working full-time, without children – something which my mother notes was “scandalous for the times.” Ruth continued secretarial work at Sears Roebuck and Oscar took a job as an accountant at Vincenz Hardware.

Initially, Ruth recalls, the desire for children belonged to Oscar, alone. However, she also ascribes their initial lack of children to Oscar's hypochondriac, saying:

He wanted to have children. I said, “Lar – Oscar, I cannot have any children until you stop running to the doctor. You don't make much, and I don't make much, and together we can't do things, because I don't want to have a child with this uncertain type of living.”

My aunt and mother have a particular interpretation of this history. My mother believes that her mother “never really wanted to have kids” - and though my aunt contradicts the content of that statement, noting “my parents DID want to have kids – that's all anybody did then – you know, you had kids and you raised them – you had three kids, it's what you did in the fifties,” she echoes the sentiment in her consistent description of her mother as “incapable of nurturing.” Nonetheless, seven years later, Ruth got pregnant and gave birth to my mother.

My aunt and mother tell the same archetypal story of their familial organization. In their

memory, their parents each claimed a daughter. My aunt says,

Lo and behold, here came Shoshana. Sho was – she was sort of my dad's badge of potency. You know, she was the long awaited heir....my dad sort of – he had his kid. My dad laid claim to her. He finally had a child, like his friends did, and he was very proud of her.

She continues:

My dad, who was the nurturing one, he already had his kid. And then here comes another girl, and I think – you know, I was quiet, and I was – I had this great big head and I didn't grow hair for nine or ten months, I was bald – was kind of weird, I was probably a weird looking thing. I think my dad was ashamed of me, he thought something wasn't quite right...I would feel his nurturing at times, but I think he really preferred your mom.

My mother – who says things like “when my dad had me” - also seems quite clear about her role to her parents. “When I was born,” she says, “my dad focused on me. That's what made her want to have – I think – a second child. And then Trudy became her child.”

My grandmother does not speak explicitly of this particular structure of “claim” and “ownership” over her children - in fact, when she refers to the early lives of her daughters, she consistently refers to them as “the girls,” rarely making a distinction between them – but the structure is somewhat apparent in the ways she speaks her stories. “I decided I would try to have a child, because I wanted a child, too” she says. “It was Shoshana, your mother. He was very happy about it.” She continues:

I was happy with the child and so was he. He could feel like he's a man now, because all my friends had their children some years earlier. Oscar was working at that point, and he had a spotty work ethic, because he was always sort of sick – not really! - and so I wasn't working when I had the children. Then, I had Trudy. We moved to the South Side.

The move to the South Side in my mother and Trudy's early childhood was significant, as the South Side of Chicago would become the stage of a significant battle for racial identity in the lives of my mother, Trudy and Larry. In Ruth's articulation, the move was circumstantial; “[Oscar was] working on the south side, regularly, doing accounting work. He was not a CPA, but he did accounting work for some company on the South Side, and he wanted to be closer to work, so that's why we moved,” she says. This neighborhood – Chicago's South Side – was to become a

fully personified (if ambivalent) character in the lives of my aunt and mother.

Trudy says,

Our first neighborhood, on the South Side..was a very working-to-middle-class new post-war neighborhood that sprouted out of the prairie. It was actually a prairie – not that far off of the lake....for the most part, it was families, real cheap new houses..there were a lot of blue collar people working at the steel mills – and then you worked your way up....

The demographic of the South Side at that time was fairly homogeneous. She continues:

Here were these little affordable houses sprouting up and the message was that these were for young, white families to plunk down and have their baby boom babies and make their kids life better...

My mother echoes the description. “It was white,” she says, “and it was a very working class area. They started developing these huge tracts of land with these little ticky tacky houses...it was entirely Catholic and Jewish.” She continues:

I didn't know there was anything but Jewish and Catholic, I didn't even know that there was a such thing as Protestant, because everybody in the neighborhood was Jewish or Catholic

The atmosphere inside the new house on the South Side belied the “vital” character of the neighbor as a whole. “It was really, really scary [the house],” my mother says. “You could never depend on your parents to take care of you. My mother was emotionally unavailable and my father was, you know, when he would have his breakdowns, what would happen is, it was like a veil would descend and he was cut off.”

In relief, the neighborhood, in my aunt and mother's articulation, was a buoy. In their memories, it takes on the “life” and “spirit” that their family didn't provide. “It was a fun place to be in,” my mother says, “there were lots of kids around. And Karen and Trudy and I and the other kids on the block, we had our own world, independent of the adults. We created our own society.” My aunt says, “that was really OUR neighborhood.”

Ruth stayed home to care for the kids, and Oscar, Ruth says, “got a better job with a relative that he knew, on his side. They had a hardware store on the south side, and they were

very friendly. It was his cousin or something. He used to go there to do the books.” And so life moved for them at what seemed to be this strange, contradictory pace - the boundaries very clearly delineated, at least for “the girls,” between *outside the house* and *in*.

In 1960, Ruth gave birth to Larry. She was 38 at the time. Trudy remembers feeling trepidation – fear that, perhaps, her mother was “too old” to have another child. “I remember being a little nervous that my mom was pregnant,” she says. “In those days, people were getting married in their 20s and they were having kids in their 20s and 38 seemed kind of old.” My mother and aunt believe that Larry was unanticipated. “They didn't want to have a third kid,” my mother says. Trudy seems similarly convinced – as they understand it, the family structure was already somewhat balanced; Ruth had her kid and Oscar had his. Larry's arrival changed the constellation. “He was unclaimed,” Trudy says. According to both Trudy and my mother, Larry was a source of nervous energy, his presence conjured an open-secret fear between Oscar and Ruth. Trudy says:

I still remember riding to Swedish Covenant – I remember “it's a boy!” and having this boy and being just flooded with excitement – I was in kindergarten and I was going to bring his “babies first picture” to show and tell....She had a nurse, you know, a nurse that came with her from the hospital. And she was holding the baby-- a middle-aged black lady – and the baby was swaddled. All I could see was his little eye, he had this cap on and I could just see this one eye, and I thought he was the cutest thing I ever saw. That's my first memory of him, and that's the day we took him home. And I remember bringing his picture for show and tell. And then I remember – and I'm kind of jumping ahead – but I do remember your sister...your mom and I...saying “Oh, we should get a dog” and my mom would say “wait until Larry's older.” This very kind of, hovering, fearful attitude about Larry when he was a baby. I didn't know what that was about.

Ruth's version is somewhat differently articulated, but there are two crucial resonances – the articulation of race (both Trudy and Ruth note that they had hired “a black lady” as a nurse/caretaker) and a sense of Larry's *difference*. Ruth says:

I had Larry, and Oscar always said, “you know, there's something wrong with Larry.” I never saw it, except that Larry was a boy, and the girls were easy. Larry was difficult. The girls were easy to appease. The boy, no. I would take him to a friend's home who had a boy at the same age.... I don't know. I didn't think there was something wrong with him, except he's a boy and very much active. Very active physically. When I had the child, I

had a woman come in after I came home from the hospital, because I was pretty knocked out. And she said, "I've never seen" -- she was a black lady who took care of kids -- "I've never seen such straight legs in an infant." He was built very nicely.

Larry shifted the family dynamic greatly. Trudy notes:

There was this whole fragility thing; this attitude of "no, you can't do this, because he's a baby" or "no, you can't do that, because he's a baby" and "maybe when he's older," or "when he's this age," or "That age" or "when he settles down." As time went on, you started to see -- and I was really young myself, so I couldn't put my finger on it -- but there was, like, this cloud just parking over our house.

After Larry's birth, Oscar instituted a strange house custom -- he gave his children nicknames to describe what he saw to be their archetypal characteristics. "My dad used to call Larry 'larruping Larry,' whatever that means," Trudy says. "I think 'larruping' was kind of -- bottomless energy...I became 'tearful Trudy' and your mom was 'selfish Sho.'" These nicknames -- and the dynamic they invented or described -- figured dramatically into their self-conception.

In their recollection, the house was marked by a sense of ever-deepening alienation from their parents, and Trudy and my mother began to take on more and more responsibility. "I always thought of Larry as my son," my mother has said. "Trudy and I raised him." Certainly, there were external factors causing their parents' distraction. Money was tight -- my mother recalls times when there were "newspapers on the windows, instead of curtains," and Trudy senses a "great fear" over their class-stability. Her explanation for it, however, bridges the "reality" of the "external" with the sort of pathological perception that she sees as endemic to their household.

She says:

The fear I was sensing was the product of a couple of things; it was their experience growing up during the depression, so their memories of being without money and their terror that they might end up without money and that they had three children, and, you know, "my god, we're going to have to send them to college." There was a lot of anxiety around. And just the fact that my father was trying to climb -- you know, he was a sensitive man who was trying to climb his own little corporate ladder and make it and he was carrying that alone. He was trying to earn money to take care of these three children and I think he felt completely overwhelmed by it, and he wasn't getting help. You know, it's not that she had to go out and work, but the only money coming into the house was his and she wasn't creating that safe place. It was like he was taking care of her, too; there was that very childlike part of her, so it was like he had four children. He

had to take care of these four people, and I think it was just too much for him. I remember my brother being a boy, and being full of energy, and I remember my dad coming home from work, and thinking “does he even remember, or know, he has a son?” And I feel weird saying this, but I remember thinking that, I remember thinking “he's barely had time to notice that he now has another child.”

In everyone's memory, Larry's birth triggered a change that was most dramatically marked in Oscar. My mother says:

[My father] would stare into space, he would be unresponsive, he would sit still, he would get this scary look, he looked like he was going to cry all the time, he would stop going to work. When Larry was born, they started to last a couple of months and then the last one lasted well over a year.

Sometimes, Oscar's increasing emotional unavailability articulated in direct relation to what is described as Larry's “problems.” Thus began the endless, impossible dance of the proverbial chicken and the proverbial egg. “It's so hard to tell whether Larry was born with problems, or whether he developed them as a result of what went on in the house,” my mother says, “...but he started to have these terrible interminable temper tantrums.” She continues:

And it wouldn't end, like most kids' temper tantrums. It would go on and on, he'd get purple in the face, and I don't remember exactly when all this started. My parents didn't know what to do with him – my dad used to do things like, we had this furnace room in the basement, and it was kind of scary, and my dad would put Larry in this creepy room. As Trudy puts it “there was stuff happening – these behaviors and eruptions.

Kind of strange stuff, like, running away.” Even from a young age, my mother describes him as “serious.” “Larry carried the weight of the world on his shoulders,” she says. It also seems that from his earliest encounters with education, Larry was deeply invested in intellectual production and academic validation. Even in his early elementary years, he would show up incredibly early for school and sit outside, waiting for the doors to open. While this is sometimes articulated as an example of “obsessive” behavior, Trudy describes it as an attempt to gain attention and receive love within – and without – his family. “[He was] trying to effect my mother,” she says, “trying to reach her, and they were doing this kind of weird enmeshed dance, and things were wrong, and he wasn't having the kind of relief that we were, in having friendships and getting out of the house.”

Ruth never speaks directly or explicitly of Larry's behavior at home. "I always knew he was smart," she says, "but he was difficult. Unlike the girls. He had some strange ways, let's say." She continues:

He was okay, except he wasn't terribly friendly child. Maybe he took it from me, I don't know. No, he – the one thing about him that I could not understand was that he was very difficult to train on the toilet. I hear that boys are more so than girls... He was different, he loved mathematics, and he excelled with highest honors and masters in math.

Indeed, most of Ruth's description of Larry hinges upon his intelligence, particularly when it comes to math. She recalls a particular moment of tension between Larry and Oscar in Larry's early life as follows,

Even when he was a kid, the teachers would say, "he's a whiz at math, he doesn't even have to put it on paper." Even Oscar took him once to the baseball game, and they were figuring out averages and – ha – Oscar was annoyed I think, because Larry got the answer immediately without paper and my husband, you know, Oscar was figuring it out. But, I think he was a genius. A lot of geniuses are strange.

The chronology of the next few years is remembered very differently by my aunt, my mother, and my grandmother. According to Ruth, when Larry was five years old, Oscar displaced a vertebrae in his back picking up a wheelbarrow full of concrete. She tells a particular story of his surgery – one which ends with him institutionalized at a psychiatric hospital. I will quote at great length from the interview I conducted with her, as this story is crucial to later sections of this chapter. She says:

He had surgery, and it was SUCCESSFUL. But he refused to believe that it was successful. And the doctor said, "you have to start getting back to work. Give you something to do. That's all you think of – that you're sick." So what happened – I had a tough time with Oscar. Oh yeah. Very tough. And I told Oscar, he went there one day after he had – he called Mr. Miller and he said "I'm ready to go back to work." the doctor says you've got to get started. "Well, great. That's wonderful. That's great. We'll be happy to see you. That's great. We'll pick you up."

She continues:

Oscar said he couldn't drive, which wasn't true, but that's okay. "We'll come and pick you up and take you home, and you don't have to be there the whole hour, if you just want to start, half a day, whatever it is." They were very nice. So that's what he did. They picked him up in the morning- do you really want to hear this? It's not so nice. Okay, they picked him up in the morning, and I was relieved because he was always home. I was doing

things, and he was complaining – he's full of pain and he can't stand. So, I was so glad to see him go. In fact, I had a psychiatrist come that he knew, because there was something not right with Oscar. Psychiatrist said, “yes, he's very depressed, but if he goes back to work, he'll be fine.” YEAH. He went back for half a day, and I was delighted. I did some things I couldn't do when he was there. Then, Oscar comes home after a couple of hours – they drove him home. He comes in carrying something, hiding something under his coat. I didn't like the looks of it. “What's that?” He says, “I've got to go to the washroom.” When he put his coat down, he neatly put whatever it was under his coat – winter coat, it was cold – and went to the washroom. He came out and I had discovered, before he came in – I went to look! What's he hiding from? What for? It was one of these guns that you shoot a flame with – what is it called, there's a name for it. They had all kinds of equipment at Vincenz hardware. He just took it. And when I saw that, I knew. It is important to interject, perhaps, that at this point in the interview, despite

understanding the generally agreed upon “facts” of my grandfather's institutionalization, I was surprised and upset by what I heard. I say this only to account for what appears, in transcription, as a strange insistent defiance. She says,

I ran out to see if the guy was still there. Luckily, he was still there, you know, writing down things or something before he goes back – he dropped him off. I said, “you know, Oscar has one of these guns.” he says, “yeah, he says he wants to finish the basement.” The basement was finished a year ago. He says, “well, he needs it to fix something.” I got on the phone. Oscar went to lie down, went up – not upstairs, there was no upstairs. Went to lie down, he was tired. He had worked a couple of hours. And so I said, “well maybe you can nap.” I closed the door. I got out there; he didn't want to take it back to the Vincenz. “Oscar needs it!” Yeah. He needs it. I knew what was going on, because Oscar was not acting right the whole week. First of all, he said he could never walk again – he was walking while he was saying all this.

G: So what did you think it was for?

R: What?

G: What did you think it was for?

R: BREAKDOWN.

G: But what does that mean?

R: He had to have shots in his head. What do you call it? Shock treatments.

G: But what do you think the flare gun was for?

R: I didn't hear.

G: What were you afraid that the flare gun was for?

R: There was nothing for him to do that would use one of these guns that shoot flames.

G: What did you think he was going to do with it?

R: Not a good thing; the house will be on fire. So I went to the man there that was writing in his car, and said "please take this back." and he said, "no, Oscar wants it. Mr. Miller said it was okay for Oscar to take it," and I said, "no, I don't want it in the house. Please take it back." And he did. So that was out of the house. What was he supposed to do with it? What do you think?

G: I don't know.

R: Knowing his mental aberration? The next day, after Oscar went to bed that night, I went into Larry's room. He had his own room – the girls shared a room in the back, and he had the middle one. And I saw – I saw matchbox. Matches. In these things that, you know, you open them up. Everywhere they go, they give you – for your cigarettes. Light up your cigarettes. He had them from all the places that I knew Mr. Miller and his wife always went for summer – Florida, all these places, restaurants on the way, different towns. Yes. You can imagine how I felt.

G: I guess I don't understand.

R: He put those matches in Larry's closet, which I never go to, but I did. And I found them in between things.

G: What did that mean?

R: He was going to start Larry's room on fire. He did not like Larry.

I have deleted, for space, the back and forth that ensued, at this point in the interview, between my grandmother and me. This could, of course, be read as a relatively transparent way of *saving face*: alarmed at the content, and, admittedly, somewhat angry at her mode of articulation, I pushed – asking, a number of times, "you really thought that?" and commenting, "that sounds like a big leap." She continues:

I told him Oscar, I said, "Oscar, you know what. You're not feeling well. You say you can't walk, you're walking. I think you have to go back to the Vets hospital." So he went, and guess what they did at the hospital. Without my telling. Incidentally, I did not go with him. I gave him enough money to get to the Vets hospital downtown. I called them, downtown, and "be watching for him, I think he needs help" He agreed. Immediately. He knew what he did. See, I had to discover it. He knew what he did. The day before, I think I told you, I hired a psychiatrist to find out why he was always sick, supposedly. Not, he was a healthy man. And I found out that Oscar better go to work – be occupied, OR ELSE! He'll go to the hospital. This is what the psychiatrist told me and I believed him. And he was right. Well, I got rid of the gun, and I saved the matchboxes. They were little

– you know, you open them up. And I called Mr. Miller when Oscar was away. Incidentally, I said, “I think you’ll have to go back to the Vets hospital.” He was in the Vets hospital for a long time before I even knew him. I didn’t know that. He didn’t tell me. He wanted to get married. And Oscar was a very personable fellow. How would you feel?

After this incident, Oscar remained in the psychiatric ward of the Vets hospital for a year. According to other accounts, this year was the fall of 1967 through the fall of 1968, which would, in fact, make Larry seven and eight rather than five. My mother was in high school; my aunt, finishing middle school.

While Oscar was in the hospital, the neighborhood on the South Side began to “fall apart,” mostly as a result of the block-busting occurring all over Chicago’s middle-class “ethnic” white neighborhoods. Real estate agents (predominantly white Jews, on the South Side) moved “test families” of color into the neighborhood and made “scare calls” to the white, middle-class families who owned the other houses. They made subtle and overt threats, claiming that the neighborhood was “turning over,” and that property values would decrease rapidly. One by one, Ruth’s white Jewish and Catholic neighbors sold their houses at lower-than-market prices, and the real estate agents sold them back to families of color, mostly first-time home-owners, at dramatically increased prices with exorbitant mortgage rates provided by banks with incredibly stringent policies. Many of these houses were repossessed and the families evicted within their first year of ownership – thus, the real estate agents and banks both turned a profit and the demographic of neighborhoods was changed dramatically – twice.

Simultaneously, Martin Luther King Jr had begun an affordable housing campaign as part of his anti-racist organizing initiative in Chicago. It was his assassination, on April 4th, 1968, that caused my grandmother, already wracked with a sort of racist-terror over the “safety” of her neighborhood, to sell her house on the South Side.

I think I mentioned to you that the day that Martin Luther King was killed there was a whole riot in – a lot of places, but in our area especially. The three kids were in different schools, and Oscar calls me. Every night, he would call me and tell me I should do this,

and I should do that. "Take them north! It's dangerous on the South Side!" I just listened to it, because I knew he was having problems. It was very hurtful. And I did everything myself. I bought this house alone. He was still in the hospital.

The move to the North Side was, in my mother's articulation of it, devastating for Larry. She says, "we moved and that was the total undoing of Larry. Because – what little he had in the way of roots and stability was from that neighborhood." She continues:

His context was our context, and for us, we had managed to get through most of our childhood in a somewhat stable neighborhood and I think it insulated us in a way from some of the crap in the house. But Larry was eight years younger than me, so I was in my junior year. That would make Larry really young when we moved north – he still hadn't really – it was like really pulling up stakes on him. I had one foot in college at that point – I thought, well, one more year and I'm away from this house forever. And I was, I never came back. But him, you know, he had to all of a sudden adapt to an entirely new place, entirely new people, an entirely new system, and it really, really, really threw him off. I mean, he never – that was when things got to the point when he had to be hospitalized. When we moved north, it got to the point of no return with Larry.

Certainly, the situation on the North Side of Chicago was dramatically different than that on the South Side. The neighborhood was quieter, less community-oriented, with fewer children around. Also, major changes were occurring within the Treiman household.

After nearly eighteen months hospitalized – according to my mother – Oscar returned to his family, now relocated to Chicago's North Side. The neighborhood was one Ruth had chosen for its high Jewish population and proximity to a Jewish Community Centre. She says she moved there because "that's where everyone was going" - that is, she followed the so-called "white flight," towards the relatively homogeneity of a newly-established middle class neighborhood.

Oscar adjusted slowly to his now-slightly-altered home-life, first coming home on weekend visits, then for full weeks. Certain facts of this period of time seem muddled, or out of chronological order – at some point, he left his position at Vincenz Hardware to take an accounting job at "Who's Who," a publication and publication company where he eventually became an Associate Publisher. Also around this time, Ruth decided to return to work. "I found out that Northeastern University wasn't far and I was able to drive," she says, "so I went to

northeastern, I took a full load. Four years. I had two years already and then I took four years just to make sure I had it all. And I got a bachelors in special ed and in reading.” Thus, Ruth became a special education teacher.

It seems worthwhile to wonder whether Ruth's newfound interest in special education came as a result of Larry's contact with diagnostic and psychiatric structures in his new school on the North Side. My mother theorizes:

When we were still on the South Side, he went to a little, tiny, public school around the corner and we knew everyone...in a sense, that made it easier for Larry to function, because he had a context. He was the younger brother of the Treiman girls. People knew us, we were good students, and he came in and there was a little bit more of a "yeah, yeah, we know Larry, we know the family." When we left the neighborhood, there was no more Trudy and I to help him. Suddenly, he's just thrust into this big school system, where he's just one crazy kid.

Trudy says:

When we moved, he would've been in 4th grade, and he was still really small for his age, and what he told me as an adult – I didn't know this, I just knew he didn't have a lot of friends – and he did find a friend that my mother was friendly with the mother, and his name was Steven Gorbakken, and that was his friend, and he actually got a chance to actually do some things with this friend, and sleep over and stuff like that – I wanted so much for that to give him that out, that release, but it was so few and far between when he would actually – and it was so hard for him to actually let his hair down and have fun with somebody. It was about science.

She continues:

My brother was having trouble with his peers, and trouble in school – not because he wasn't smart – but it wasn't clear what was going on there. I think it was emotional stuff that was just in the way of his learning and his ability to really be present at school. I'm sure my mom thought he had a learning disability, because that was her thing, that's what she went back to school in. I thought it was an emotional thing, but maybe that's my thing. But they're all tied together, they're not discrete. But, he was having trouble, and I don't know if it was, you know, BD [Behavioral Disorder]– they had no programs in place for kids to kind of farm them into smaller classrooms and get them extra help and extra services – but it was getting pretty clear that my brother needed something more than he was getting in the public school.

After a few harrowing years at public school, Larry was sent to a school through the Jewish Children's Bureau. Trudy describes it as “a special school for kids with emotional and

behavioral problems.” It was staffed by psychologists, teachers and social workers, and had a much higher teacher/student ratio and, apparently, Larry was relatively comfortable there. Unfortunately, it only ran through 8th grade. His graduation was followed by a year of confusion. Trudy says,

Well, what happened was, they were starting to try and figure out “what should we do?” and he had access to psychologists and social workers, and they were looking at options and there weren't a lot. And I do believe that Joanne Treiman had said to them, “You know, you should really contact the Orthogenic School.”

My mother remembers a sense that “the Orthogenic School was a perfect solution for Larry – you know, for really bright kids who are emotionally disturbed.” Trudy explains that The Orthogenic School was suggested by many people at the time, professionals and family members alike, and that everyone but Larry seemed somewhat amenable to the suggestion. Ruth, however, remembers it differently – for her, the decision was Oscar's alone. “Oscar did not want Larry in the house.” she says, “He said, 'he has problems, he must go away.' And I felt sick about it, because Larry was a very bright kid, doing fine in school. But Oscar had his way, and we sent him.” In her memory, Oscar “discarded him.” Meanwhile, she sought out other options. She says,

Before he went to the Orthogenic school, I insisted that he see a doctor and have a few tests.

A DOCTOR. Medical doctor. And they took a picture of his brain or something. They said there's nothing wrong. Nothing that they can tap out. They said he was normal, bright. They said he was different, and he didn't want to change his clothes or something like that. I had to not change my clothes, I didn't have any. But he was a little different.

Despite her protestations – or, at least, those she recalls – Larry was, indeed, sent to the Orthogenic School. At the time, it cost \$10,00 per year – a steep price. Ruth doesn't talk about how she was able to afford it – Trudy and my mother only speculate. “Someone must have been helping out,” my mother says. “\$10,000 – which in that time was much, much more.”

From everyone's recollection, Larry was adamantly opposed to the idea. My mother says,

“I understand that he was hysterical, he said 'please don't make me go, I'd rather die' and stuff like that, but I know it second hand from other people. I mean, he really really really didn't want to go, he always resisted being called crazy, he always thought the rest of the world was crazy, he always resented other for diagnosing him, all that stuff.”

Once Larry was enrolled at the Orthogenic School, he was denied contact with his family for a year and a half. My mother remembers:

We never knew who else was there, we never knew the teachers, we never knew what the building looked like, we never knew a goddamn thing. When I look back on that now, I realize how outrageous that was – that's just a complete license to abuse. But those were the rules he set forward and if you didn't like them, you could go somewhere else. In recalling the Orthogenic School, Ruth directs much of her resentment towards

Bettelheim. She says:

They don't let you see him, they don't want contact with the parents. This was a mishigas. Do you know what a mishigas is? That Bettelheim. Wrong! We saw him once a year. We did take him out for vacation. We never saw him there for more than just a few minutes, so I don't know.

Trudy speaks of it in a similar way:

A year and a half of basic silence then ensued. So, first we had that year of silence from my father, where we knew something was terribly wrong and terribly amiss – you don't just not see your living father for a year, you know something is wrong. No one tells you what is wrong, but you know something is wrong. But that then happened with my brother. So, we're moving from 68 with my father to 73 with my brother. 73/74, because that was my sophomore year of college. There's not a big – that's 5 years, 5 or 6 years later, I lose my brother for a year. And I think I was sending letters – I think I was told you can write letters. There was even a period where we couldn't write, and then there was a period we could write, but I didn't know if he was getting the letters all the time. It was agonizing. It was like 'Oh god, I want him to get this letter, I want him to know he's loved, I want him to know that I didn't disappear, I want him to know that there are people out here who love him and are rooting for him, I want him to get this letter, I want him to get what he needs in his life, I don't want him to be surrounded by strangers, cut off from everything that came before, and I want...' and I couldn't imagine how awful that must've been for a 14 year old kid. And I didn't see him again for a year and a half, because the actual home visits were not approved for a year and a half. I missed a year and a half of his young life.

After that initial year and a half, Larry was in consistent contact with Trudy – and his mother, father, and my mother, it seems – by mail. In his letters and postcards, he expressed a

genuine horror for the way that people were treated at the Orthogenic School, and, simultaneously, a concerted attempt to make the best of things. At eighteen, he signed himself out and took the GED. Then, he enrolled in the University of Illinois. As Ruth describes it

He loved going to school. He loved it. And he didn't stay at home, we rented a place for him near the school. University of Illinois. He went there for four years, you know. He graduated there, with highest honors. And one of his professors there said, "he has to go on." I said, "well, I would like him to go on, but it's expensive" and he said, "well he can get a scholarship" and he did.

She continues:

He got a scholarship and went on to get his masters with highest honors in mathematics and physics and he was working on his doctorate at the University of Ohio, because he didn't like – he took a doctorate test and passed, after he got two masters. But he didn't like the adviser for his doctorates there, and I think I know why.

The University of Ohio was Larry's last encounter with schooling, and it was incredibly difficult. Trudy says,

I think he felt that Ohio State was a failure – but what he was trying to do with Ohio State was so difficult, because he tried to move several states away and take care of everything and it was just too much. It was too much. And he got sick there.

When Larry got sick – it was mono, or perhaps pneumonia – Oscar drove down to Ohio State to pick him up. Trudy notes that he felt uniquely indebted to his father for that, and spent the rest of his life wrestling with a complex combination of gratitude, resentment and a sort of deification of his father's role in his life. My personal favorite anecdote of his Larry's conflicted relationship is little more than a transcription of a birthday card Larry sent to Oscar. Trudy says,

This was my dad's last birthday, his 71st birthday. "Dad – happy 71st birthday," from my brother, "try to enjoy things. You can't beat the second law of thermodynamics. Nevertheless, if you relax and enjoy the things you have, you'll be happier. There is even evidence that such an attitude may improve health, but don't expect that. Sincerely, Larry.

This, it seems, was Larry's way – a combination of bright-eyed intellect, brutal honesty, alarming humor, concealed anger and formal affability. I love that card.

Larry spent the better part of his adult life applying for teaching and research positions in various institutions. He went back and forth between living with Ruth and living on his own,

sometimes going through extended periods of silence or hiding, refusing to tell anyone where he lived. His health continued to deteriorate, as his control over his eating increased exponentially. He was often angry and unhappy, in direct conflict with one or more of his family members and avoiding doctors. Sometimes, though, he was engaged and thoughtful, and he was always willing to invest in rigorous political debate or delicate and beautiful scientific theorizing.

All told, there was very little about Larry's adult life in the interviews I conducted with my mother, Trudy and Ruth. Perhaps this is for the best – the loss of Larry is still fresh and powerfully overwhelming, and the more recent memories are therefore harder to contend with. Perhaps it is best to re-enter 1968, and access Larry's present ghost through that year which is most deeply and thoroughly etched into the memories of my family.

Chapter Four: Madness and the Mensch

Remembrance of Things Passed

We have yet to write the history of that other form of madness, by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbors, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness; to define the moment of this conspiracy before it was permanently established in the realm of truth

-Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization

Your grandfather was a tragic man; your uncle, a ghost. If I knew Larry only in memory, wrestling with the towering specter of vicarious Chicago nostalgia, then I knew my grandfather as a pair of glasses. I was young enough when he died to know him only in the landscape of object and emotion, as the world to my youngest self was mostly that. Oscar was impossible yarn-knit eyebrows, a clarinet, gentle. My mother loved him *closer*, and so I was meant to, too.

I was only seven when my grandfather died. Before his death, I never knew his relationship to my grandmother as anything but grandparent-ly, as if such a thing truly and objectively existed – I grew up far away, only saw them once a year and, frankly, I did not know, at that point in my life, that grandparents were *also regular people* - but could sense that, for Ruth, I was meant to love him as she did, *at a distance*. Perhaps I was meant to love him with a mixture of pity and remove, as I saw her do. I might, of course, be making this up. Hindsight is what hindsight is. It is hard to love with real proximity those who are first far away, and then dead.

If it is true that I am mapped onto the landscape of modern medicine, madness and privilege through some fluid combination of my own psychiatrization, self-conception, and personal/social history, then it follows that the lives of those who came before me – the lives of those psychiatrized before me – affect my social and personal identity in distinctly essential ways. I understand my own relationship to madness – both the madness I choose to identify myself with, and that which sticks to me through the diagnoses that I carry - through the ways in which madness is discursively produced in the larger world, but also through the ways in which I saw

madness produced in the microcosmic social environment of my family life, our stories. My ability to pass – alternately, as “mad” in Mad Pride spaces, or as “not mad” in academia, in my workplace, on the street – is related directly to the ways in which madness were constructed in the larger social landscape; a young, articulate, wealthy, white Jew from New York who is queer, alternatively gendered, had an eating disorder and was on psychiatric medication briefly inevitably accesses the modern world very differently than a poor, visibly disabled person of color with the diagnosis of a learning disability, for example, might. This is, of course, because of the ableist, gendered-sexist, homophobic, racist social construction of “madness” and disability in the modern world; it is important to remember, though, that this social construction is maintained, perpetuated, resisted, engaged with at the most microcosmic level. *Hold your family – yourself – as it were a mirror up to nature.*

I say all this because I think it is essential to remember, throughout this study, that the things that I see in the language of my family emerge from structures much larger – denser and, oddly, more diffuse – than those which I will be capable of articulating, or even noticing. Further, still, it is important to note that the particular form of social memory, as it is reliant on discourses of oppression, that I intend to enter is, itself, emergent from other, mutually constituting and mutually dependent modes of discursive production.

Before I tell you what I'm going to do, let me tell you what this chapter cannot, and will not, accomplish. In attempting to enter, quite deeply, the ways in which my family's talk on madness and absence – the way we discursively produce the ghosts of Oscar and Larry – I will gloss over some crucial historical realities. For example, I will not be studying, in any sustained way, the ways in which the medicalization of madness much have affected my family's stories. This is despite the fact that the lives of my grandparents, mother and aunt directly coincide with some crucial events in the history of modern psychiatry and the advent of both a psychiatric

taxonomy and the rise of the psychopharmaceutical industrial complex.

My grandfather was discharged from the US Army in the 1940s for what my grandmother would call “a nervous breakdown,” in an era when the incorporation of psychiatrists into military selection, training and battle was dramatically on the rise. Just as the US positioned itself against the eugenic, genocidal project of Nazi Germany, the government was shifting the nomenclature of formerly formally eugenic organizations and discourses and continuing the development of psychiatric testing and classification deeply indebted to eugenic projects of “social cleansing.” In 1949, just a few years before my mother's birth, as my grandfather was attending doctor after doctor searching in vain for a diagnosis for the health problems he was sure plagued him, the World Health Organization published a revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases that included a taxonomy of “mental illness” for the first time. In 1952, the year of my mother's birthday, the first edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the first publication of its kind and the foundation for modern psychiatry was released; in 1968, the year of my grandfather's second hospitalization, the second edition of the DSM was released (Houts 2000; Mayes and Horowitz 2005). In that same year, Socarides published *The Overt Homosexual*, a highly influential work that declared homosexuality (and, related, highly non-normative masculinity) a form of “mental illness,” leading to its designation in the second DSM as a personality disorder (Burstow 1990).

Clearly, the memory of madness in my family is deeply tied to the modernization of psychiatry, a practice which, as Suman Fernando writes, “exerts power by its diagnostic procedure and the imposition of medication and other therapies to suppress, or at least interfere with, people's ideas, beliefs and feelings – and indeed even to alter family relationships” (2000, 83). He continues:

The power derives from insisting on psychiatric judgments and the results of psychological tests as *facts* or, at least *objective findings*; in other words, psychiatry

through its so-called 'mental state' examination

- Identifies 'pathology' which has to be suppressed, if not eradicated, *in the interests of the patient*.
- Identifies behaviors which have to be controlled or prevented from affecting the public *in the interests of society*
- Acts to put things right (2000, 83)

The practice of psychiatry has always been a highly racialized technology of colonialism.

Fernando writes, “the contention that psychiatry is basically and fundamentally racist and cannot but continue to be racist as long as the profession fails to address this fact” (2000, 83). He continues:

Early psychiatrists were called 'Alienists', people responsible for determining who was 'alien' to society and who was not. And designating human problems in terms of 'illness' or people requiring 'help' became very mixed up with the social control of people. The original eugenic movement that justified, indeed promoted, the genocide in Germany (of Jews, Gypsies, etc) arose within clinical psychology (e.g. Francis Galton), supported by psychiatrists (e.g. Kraepelin in Germany) wishing to 'cleanse' society (the movement for mental hygiene). Today, the so-called violence initiatives in the United States involves psychiatrists and psychologists identifying children for treatment to prevent them becoming dangerous. And of course the everyday work of psychiatrists in compulsory detention and forced medication is a natural part of our social system codified in the Mental Health Act. *Racism is involved in both instances*. (2000, 90)

Aside from this theoretical gloss – and the occasional return to Fernando and the development of the DSM - I will not contend explicitly with the production of a bio-deterministic, psychiatric model of “mental illness” (and, related, the production of that particular form of subjectivity, the person who conceives of herself/is conceived of by her family as “mentally ill”) in this chapter. Suffice to say, however, the study that follows is deeply theoretically indebted to the notion of madness as a social production – indeed, it is crucial to keep in mind that production of mad identities by the technologies of governance, discourse and psychiatry as illegible is an attempt to produce and maintain a racist, classist, sexist, homophobic, ableist normate *in relief*. As Snyder and Mitchell put it, “disabled bodies are constituted as unduly

discordant within a rapidly solidifying fiction of an idealized American body politic” (2006, 24).

This is not, of course, to deny the pain (and many other varied and colorful experiences) of people who are identified as mad, nor is it to deny the possibility that psychiatry or medical intervention (or, frankly, any mainstream or alternative non-medical therapy; further, the identity discourses of “mental illness”) might be useful to people who have been marked as mad, so long as these therapies/interventions are self-selected.

Towards that end, this section attempts to deal with where the particular life experience of a young, articulate, white Jew from New York who is queer, alternatively gendered, had an eating disorder and was on psychiatric medication briefly (mine) by entering the particular ways that my family has produced the madness of my particular inheritance – the stories that make my bones. I am, in particular, interested with the tacit relationship that my family's memory of my grandfather's madness - as it laid the groundwork for their/our production of Larry's madness (and the lack of intervention /lack of desire to label and discuss mine) - has with Jewish identity. It is my belief that, whether know it or not, the way we have remembered my Oscar and Larry speak loudly of the cultural discourses of legitimate masculinity and whiteness in relation to the then-contemporary status of Jewish identity “not white/not quite” (Boyarin 1997, 262).

In “Whiteface Performances: 'Race,' Gender and Jewish Bodies,” Anne Pellegrini writes:

Many of the medical conditions for which Jews were held to be at higher risk as a 'race' were the very same disorders to which women as a 'sex' were considered to be more prone: 'The Jews, as is well known to every physician, are notorious sufferers of the functional disorders of the nervous system. Their nervous organization is constantly under strain, and the least injury will disturb its smooth workings' (Maurice Fishberg [1911], quoted in Gilman 1991: 63). Hysteria is one of the signal instances of the elision between the Jewish and female body. (1997, 109)

My mother, grandmother and aunt all remember Oscar – and, related, Larry – in different emotional and intellectual registers; however, they all share a certain crucial characterizations that I think speak loudly to this connection between the construction of “hysteria,” the feminization of

the Jewish male body, and the whitening of Jewish identity in the 20th century. In attempting to map the stories that they tell about madness in their families onto the landscape of a shifting Jewish identity in the middle of the 1900s, I hope to discover the foundational work for the possibility of my identity.

This is, of course, highly speculative work, teasing implication out of the stories of my family. It is meant to contextualize, to situate, and, eventually, to reflect mostly on my positioning as *one who contextualizes*. I have some trepidation – let's face it, lots – about entering the stories of my family from this strange historical/analytic standpoint. I can only hope that someday I will be subject to the same kind of scrutiny, both reverent and fierce. I can only hope to be made explicable to those that follow me; I can only hope that they use all the tools currently unavailable to me, obscured from my view. *These are my stories. These are not my stories. These stories are me. I am not my stories.*

Oscar

The category masculinities is not meant to be a stable consolidation of historically specific subject-positions or a collective term for masculinity, but a polysemy denying the autonomy and stability of male identity as it claims to specify and interpret masculine self-perception, performativity and existence. The term brings into play the recognition of the profound multiplicity and conditional status of the historical experience of male subjects. Masculinity becomes not the defining quality of men, of their fantasies and real experiences of self and other, but one coordinate of their identity that exists in a constant dialectical relation with other coordinates

-Michael Uebel, Race and the Subject of Masculinities

In speaking of others, we speak of ourselves; we are produced in the telling of our stories in ways we may never notice, never see. As I shift uncomfortably on my grandmother's living room couch, our conversation punctuated by the great storm of a gray cat blowing through the room, I hear all of me in the questions I ask her about my grandfather. *The things I want to know say more about me than her stories might ever say about Oscar. The things she says about Oscar say more about her than she might ever know.* My eyes drift from the framed newspaper clippings

to smattering of inexplicable objects on the piano – glass candy in a glass bowl, packets upon packets of hand-i-wipes, stray special education tests from the 1970s, costume jewelry – and bumper sticker American flags pressed to the walls.

We always produce ourselves in relief, bounced off of the objects, people and discourses that surround. My grandmother, however, does this more actively than anyone I know. She understands herself *in relief* to her children, her neighbors, Oscar. As I speak to her on this oddly warm March day, she speaks in the highly negative terms that I have come to associate her most with; negative not merely in content but in structure – she is *unlike* the people around her, she knows what she *doesn't* do. However, there is one particular element of her identity that is constructed in positive terms – again, both in content and structure. This is her relationship to Jewishness – particularly, Jewish “values.” She *is* Jewish, she *embodies* Jewishness. From her ardent support of Israel to her deep involvement in Jewish Community Centers, Ruth's life revolves around constructing a coherent and positive Jewish “cultural” identity. She met her husband at the Jewish People's Institute; moved from the South Side of Chicago, already a heavily-Jewish area, to the North Side to be “closer to the Jews”; raised her children with a strong sense of “education and Jewish values.” She describes herself as “a mensch.” “A real person,” she says. “Doing things, helping others. Concerned for others. That's me.”

My mother and aunt remember her relationship to Jewish identity as crucial in their childhood, though, significantly, they articulate it quite differently. Trudy remembers learning from her mother that

Jews were these wonderful, sensitive, decent people who wouldn't dream of tossing anyone aside due to their race or ethnicity and wouldn't dream of putting a pogrom on any peoples. And then there were these Nazis, who were devils.

A crucial element of Trudy's recollection of her mother's Jewish identity is the notion of suffering; this, of course, had a basis in Ruth's experience of anti-Semitism throughout her life,

but also functioned in myriad complex historical ways transmit the notion to her children that Jewish identity is intrinsically connected to and maintained through the experience of pain – a notion that she herself does not actively articulate or, likely, condone.

My mother remembers:

[Ruth] really wanted us to know that Jews were better, they were smarter, they were superior, that we should stick with them, that we should have Jewish friends, that we should marry a Jewish guy, we should support Israel, if you're giving a gift to charity, it should be a Jewish charity, we should plant trees in Israel, we should buy Israeli products, all that kind of thing. But in terms of religious stuff, very little religious stuff.

She continues:

[Ruth is] Jewish in a very particular way. Like, we never ever ever celebrated any holidays. Ever. I didn't know about – there were Jewish traditions that I'd never heard of. I came to New York and they were completely new to me. But she was very aggressively culturally Jewish, because of her dad.

Ruth herself scoffs at the Jewish “religion” as an organized practiced – when asked if she raised her children religious, she answers “No,” and is quick to add, “I never had a Jewish education.” When asked what makes her a Jew, she says, “my feelings towards people.”

Jewish identity defined as such – as a set of cultural codes, political affiliations and ethical beliefs transmitted simultaneously through culture and family heritage/genealogy – is thus crucial to the way that Ruth understands her subjectivity and agency in the world; and it follows, I posit, that they are crucial to the way that she remembers, and makes stories of, Oscar and Larry. This “positive construction” of Jewish identity as a set of belief, values, orientations itself has an element of this construction *in relief* – she says to me that Jews have experienced “the most pain of any oppressed group,” in direct comparison to the assumed lack-of-pain of others, just as her secular identity is produced and consolidated in relief to the dogmatism and implicit “anti-modernism” of deeply religious identity.. Trudy recalls Ruth's Jewishness produced in opposition to a devalued Christianity. She says, “There was a disdain of Christianity and everything it stood for. Christianity stood for evil, it stood for stupidity, - they loved their church, they were idiotic.”

Ruth also uses this comparative mode that tacitly constructs her Jewish identity to produce her version of Oscar.

In her speech, Ruth constructs a particular version of Oscar. “He was a nice guy,” she repeats, “he was very friendly.” “He was a good man,” she says, “He was very bright, too.” “But he was not well,” she continues.

Interestingly, though Ruth is invested in “sickness” as a fundamental and intrinsic characteristic, her pathologization of Oscar is not bio-medical; rather Oscar seems, in Ruth's eyes, afflicted with a sort of illness of “lack.” Though she occasionally names his “sickness” as “hypochondria,” what is most consistent is her insistence on describing his “sickness” in terms of incapacity – he is defined through the things that, in her eyes, he failed to do or embody. This is particularly striking from Ruth because psychiatric diagnostic language was absolutely available to her at the time, if not solely due to her oft-repeated commitment to science and medicine as explanatory paradigms for human life, then certainly as a result of her training and certification as a special education teacher. Yet it is “lack” that defines Oscar's “sickness,” rather than any psychiatric diagnosis.

His fear – that is, his lack of courage – appears often in Ruth's description of Oscar's days in the army. “He was afraid to go to France,” she says, “He was afraid, I understood that, but I never knew why he was so afraid.” “But what happened,” she continues, “really what happened, that I found out not until he had his second breakdown, was that he had a breakdown in the army.”

When he started to work “he didn't make much” because he had a “spotty work ethic.” That is, he lacked the capacity, in her eyes, to perform the duties expected of a man in the 1950s. This, she claims, is because “he was SICK. Running to the doctor, and the doctor said, 'get out of here,'" she says. In an interesting gesture, Ruth often defines his “sickness” as his refusal to

“accept that he wasn't sick.” This makes him, to her, She remembers him as “nuts,” “weak,” and “scared to death.” His “mental aberration,” as she calls it, also manifests in what she saw as his contradictory investment in parenting. She cites his excitement at the birth of my mother as a desperate grab at masculinity - “I was happy with the child and so was he,” she says, “He could feel like he's a man now.”

Though she recalls Oscar as an enthusiastic father to my mother and Trudy, she is convinced that he was incapable of parenting a son. “Oscar was not too happy about having a boy, when he found out I'm going to have a boy,” she says. “I don't know why. He said something, 'you mean, I'll have to take him to baseball games?’” She attributes what she understood to be his murderous designs on Larry - “he wanted Larry out of the way,” - to this inability to love, let alone manage, a son. “Oscar never really liked Larry,” she says. As a result, she felt as if she was left with the full weight of emotional and parental responsibility in the house. “He was a good man,” she says, “but I had to do everything.”

Before I proceed, it is important to note that situating Ruth's stories and language in wider discourses of Jewish masculinity and race-making is an essential move towards figuring personal/ familial complicity in oppressive structures; however, Ruth's complicity in these oppressive structures – subconscious or conscious – cannot be understood outside of her marginalization as a Jewish woman in those same structures. I worry, sometimes, that because I clearly feel a sort of hereditary anger and resentment towards Ruth because of how my mother and aunt related to her in their youth (and continue to relate to her now), I do not articulate her marginality with the full force and scope of honor that it requires. In speaking her husband in ways that ostensibly positioned him, I will posit, as “inappropriately masculine,” she both contributed to and was deeply conditioned by the same heteropatriarchal structures that oppressed her quite actively in her life. Ruth has always maintained an outright distrust of men; I think it is

important to underscore that this distrust of men was not only fully warranted, but, in many ways, propagated an anti-patriarchy politic that I deeply respect. Her survival through North American culture in the middle of the twentieth century, and the power she asserted and claimed positioned itself against the heteropatriarchal misogyny and anti-Semitism that she actively experienced. Her “attitude towards men and marriage and stuff” represents an act of defiance that has political resonance for me; further, I believe that it contextualizes much of the very behavior that so hurt and traumatized my aunt, uncle and mother. Of course, this contextualization does not excuse her of responsibility to and for the damage that she has done and the hurt that she has caused; simply puts it into conversation with the wider world.

Ostensibly, Ruth has painted a picture of the failure of normative (read: white and/or Christian – I will return to this) masculinity. Oscar's “sickness,” his “lack” is his inability to perform as a “real man.” Oscar appears as a reverse image of the ideal 1950s North American man: where this archetype is a hard-working, bread-winning, home-owning, able-bodied, healthy and virile, unquestionably white strong father figure with an emotional stoicism,⁵ Oscar was often on leave from work, hospitalized while Ruth was buying and moving into a new house, frequently visiting the doctor for any number of complaints, was highly emotive and was troubled by and perhaps ambivalent about his son. Oscar was also, significantly, a Jew. Ruth, of course, had deep and lasting investments in Jewish identity – but, as has been noted, these investments were particular. In failing to perform appropriate masculinity, Ruth also tacitly characterizes Oscar as *the wrong kind of Jew*.

For Ruth, the “wrong kind of Jew” is “the hysteric.” Indeed, Ruth “feminizes” (a complex notion, to be sure; I will return to the investments and political project of “feminization” as a form of devaluation) Oscar's identity; her insistence on his “weakness,” “hypochondria,” and

5 See iconic television of the era including “Father Knows Best,” “Leave It To Beaver,” or, for a comprehensive study of the particular discursive masculinities of the era, see James Gilbert's Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005

“paranoia,” as well as his inability to perform the tasks of “appropriate masculinity” call upon pathologizing discourses of “hysteria” that simultaneously oppress women, queer men, and Jews and conflate their various, and often overlapping, identities.

Boyarin writes:

Hysteria..while gendered paradigmatically feminine, is not exclusively about women but involves both women and “feminized” men....As I have observed in the previous chapter, the status of working men, who are referred to as being “like women” in East European Jewish culture, provides an example of this point. “Hysteria” itself – a woman's malady, as feminist historians have properly registered – provides another elegant demonstration of this thesis, because hysteria was not exclusive to anatomical women but to women and certain racially marked men. (1997, 192/3)

Further to the point, Boyarin writes:

All the features that construct the figure of the homosexual construct the Jew as well, namely, hypersexuality, melancholia, and passivity...Since within this culture, male hysteria and homosexuality are both symptoms and products of gender inversion, there is a slippage between them: the Jew was queer and hysterical – therefore not a man. (1997, 215)

Oscar's “lack of appropriate masculinity,” marked by “hysteria” makes him subject to a complex matrix of intersecting oppressions, in which, as “hysterical” and “Jewish” he appears simultaneously as “queered” in gender and orientation. As in Ruth's eyes, it is so in the wider world. However, there is a crucial further aspect to Oscar's “wrong kind of Jewishness”; the production of this archetype *in relief* to “the right kind of Jewishness.” Boyarin continues, “in response, the normatively straight Jewish man was invented to replace the bent *Ostjude* and his hysteria – his alternative gendering – was the first victim” (1997, 215).

While Oscar's pathologization/ “lack” appears in the context of both the broad archetype of 1950s white North American masculinity, it also appears in the context of another powerful archetype; one which carried less valence, perhaps, in popular white-stream culture but was deeply important to my grandmother in particular and to modern secular Ashkenazi Jewish identity at large – the myth of the “muscle Jew.”

Ruth's characterization of Oscar is deeply encoded with a form of Jewish masculinity that

Daniel Boyarin traces back to the Babylonian Talmud. Rather than critiquing the archetype pre-“muscle Jew” characterization of typical Jewish masculinity - “nonaggressive, not strong, not physically active” - as a discriminatory stereotype of anti-Semitic culture, Boyarin asserts that the scholarly, sensitive, “feminized” Jewish man was “a positive product of the self-fashioning of rabbinic masculinity in a certain, very central, textual product of the culture, the Babylonian Talmud” (1997, 81). Indeed, Boyarin's writing makes abundantly clear that the conflation of “feminized” masculinity with “inappropriate” or “failed” masculinity is, itself, a product of a deeply entrenched heteropatriarchal binary gendered system that values traits/characteristics/identities assigned “male”/ “masculine” over those assigned “female”/ “feminine.” Both the devaluation of those things “feminized” within Jewish culture and the creation of the “muscle Jew” emerge at the interstices between a normalizing/assimilating mandate from this dominant heteropatriarchal binary gendered system and an active appeal towards/push for assimilation into this culture on the part of certain Jews.

Daniel Boyarin writes:

The Westernization process for Jews, clearly then not to be simply identified with modernization *tout court*, was one in which *mentsch* as Jewish male ideal became largely abandoned for a dawning ideal of the “New Jewish Man,” “the Muscle-Jew,” a figure almost identical to his “Aryan” confreres and especially the “Muscular Christian,” also born at about this time. Reversing the cultural process by which the late antique Jewish male and the Christian religious male got their self-definition in opposition to prevailing imperial modes of masculinity, in the Victorian era both of these groups sought to conflate their masculinity with that of “real men.” (1997, 37)

This notion of the “New Jewish Man” was born, in part, out of what Daniel Boyarin notes as “the situation of the European Diaspora male Jew as politically disempowered” (1997, 231) as a result of both tangible political barriers and programs and a cultural narrative of queerness, hysteria and feminization. In response, “‘Feminine’ Jewish passivity coded as homosexual and experienced as shameful for ‘real men’ was to be rewritten as an original ‘manly’ aggressiveness.” (Boyarin 1997, 245)

Quoting Paul Breines, Daniel Boyarin writes:

As Paul Breines has written, “[T]he cult of the tough Jew as an alternative to Jewish timidity and gentleness rests on ideals of ‘masculine beauty,’ health and normalcy that are conceived *as if their validity were obvious and natural*. They [Muscle-Jews] have, in other words, internalized unquestioningly the physical and psychological ideals of their respective dominating cultures. In doing so they forget that, far from being self-evident cultural universals, those ideals are predicated on a series of exclusions and erasures – of effeminate men, pacifism, Arabs, gentleness, women, homosexuals, and far from the least, Jews.” (in Boyarin 1997, xxi)

As an attempt to combat political disempowerment, there was a push by many European Diaspora Jews towards assimilation. The technology for this assimilation was Zionism.

Examining the lives and identity-talk of such prominent Zionists as Freud and Theodor Herzl, Boyarin uncovers a crucial discursively repressed element of Zionist thinking – its attempted use as a panacea of Jewish marginality. Boyarin writes, “Zionism was considered by many to be as much a cure for the disease of Jewish gendering as a solution to economic and political problems of the Jewish people” (1997, 277).

“The Jewish male,” Boyarin writes “set out to reinstate himself as manly in the terms of the masculinist European culture that had rejected and abused him” (1997, 254). To do so, Jewish culture-makers made use of the heteropatriarchal, racist, gendered-sexist, homophobic and ableist technology of colonization. Boyarin writes, “Zionism is coded male because it is essentially about masculinity” (1997, 271). He continues, “If, in other national movements, ‘manliness’ is made to serve nationalism, for Herzl nationalism was an instrument in the search for manliness.” (1997 302)

I quote at length:

Zionism for Freud, and indeed for Herzl, was not simply a political program. It was not even an alternative to assimilation with the culture of western Europe, but rather a fulfillment of the project of assimilation, as I shall argue in the next chapter. Assimilation for these Jews was a sexual and gendered enterprise, an overcoming of the political and cultural characteristics that marked Jewish men as a “third sex,” as queer in their world. For Freud, Zionism was motivated as much by the Oscar Wilde trials as by the Dreyfus trial. It was a return to Phallustine, not Palestine. Freud's sexualized politics is not so

much about freedom from oppression as about passing. It is impossible to separate the question of Jewishness from the question of homosexuality in Freud's symbolic, textual world. In that world, passing, for Jews, entailed homosexual panic, internalized homophobia, and, ultimately, aggression (1997, 222).

Boyarin concludes, "Zionism is truly the most profound sort of assimilationism, one in which the Jews become like all nations, that is, like Aryans, but remain Jews in name" (1997, 276).

The Jewish identity that Ruth tacitly constructs in opposition to Oscar's "lack" calls upon this discourse of the Zionist "muscle Jew." Further, though, Ruth's own ardent Zionism and glowing retrospective picture of her Zionist father as the very Zionist/Aryan archetype of the "muscle Jew" - "physically strong and active, the head of the family, dominant in the public world of politics at home and abroad" (Boyarin 1997, 231) - reveals a real investment in promoting this type of Jewish identity as Oscar's expense.

Ruth remembers her father - a staunch Zionist who once, she has told me, walked to Poland to see Theodor Herzl speak - as a powerful and trustworthy man. She speaks of him in loving, reverent tones. She recalls:

My father loved the farm, because he was very good at agriculture. He had had a farm in the early farm days when my three sisters were alive, before I was born. They had a farm, and my father did really well. His idea was to be good enough to go to Israel with his family.

Trudy remembers "her father thought of himself as a Zionist." She also recalls that he was her "favorite parent." My mother has the same recollection. It seems to me that in Ruth's characterization of Oscar, she calls upon the specter of her father's success as "the New Jewish man" *in relief*.

This particular formation of Jewish identity is interesting in that it promotes the perpetuation of a discrete and unique Jewish identity, but belies a strategy of assimilation into dominant white Christian ideals "predicated on a series of exclusions and erasures - of effeminate men, pacifism, Arabs, gentleness, women, homosexuals, and far from the least, Jews" (Breines,

quoted in Boyarin 1997, xxi).

Thus, the anti-assimilationist rhetoric of this particular formation of secular Jewish identity becomes a screen for a deep seated desire to become legible to and wield power within authority structures in mainstream North American culture – that is, the anti-assimilationist rhetoric of the “muscle Jew” identity, which promotes maintaining Jewishness as a discrete “ethnic” category, belies a Jewish desire to *become more white*.

For Ruth, this desire dictated actions and story-makings that helped to consolidate her own whiteness and privilege. Boyarin notes,

An entire Jewish collective – not excepting its Orthodox members – engaged in a project of the assimilation of Jewish culture to *Kultur*, including an assimilation of Judaism itself to Protestantism, the sublime faith, and much of this assimilation of Judaism included the reconstruction of gendered roles.....men and women alike within Western Jewish communities adopted the dominant middle-class view that women were responsible for inculcating moral and religious consciousness in their children and within the home more generally. According to this view, women were also the primary factor in the formation of their children's Jewish identity. *The conservative role of maternal keeper of the domestic flame of Judaism became a fundamental aspect of the project of assimilation*. Rather than the conversion of the Jews, the total conversion of Judaism was the solution. As Hyman stunningly concludes, “the Mother in Israel” was but a “Jewish version of the American ‘True Woman.’” (1997, 247/8, emphasis in the original)

When Ruth says she “did everything” for the family, I hear the resonant tones of this “Mother in Israel” that she balanced in her own self-conception with her belief in being “a mensch.” In her recollection, she was left without a partner in all of the domestic and business activities of running modern North American nuclear family life, and thus, she came to embody both the role of the “maternal keeper of the domestic flame of Judaism” and the “alternative paradigm of ‘manliness’” of the mensch, which was available to her because she was a woman and was therefore under no self-enforced obligation to embody the strictly binary “muscle Jew” masculinity reserved for “real men.”

Though racist (and gendered-sexist, homophobic, ableist) and reprehensible, the desire for race-based privilege inherent in the construction of the “muscle Jew,” for Ruth and many

others, emerged from a place of multiple marginality and genuine fear. Though history does not excuse behavior, it is important to note that Ruth was responding to both a general culture of anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia and misogyny and the experiences of assault, obligation, unhappiness and discrimination in her life. This, however, played out quite differently for her children, who were born at a different point on the time-map of Jewish whitening. How they remember their father's madness – and, tacitly, his Jewishness – speaks of this different time, and of the kind of pained secular Jewishness that they inherited from Ruth.

My mother and Trudy were born as “white people,” both in their understanding and, it seems, in the developing identity of middle class secular Ashkenazi Jews in urban America. Their relationship with their own Jewish identity contains, within it, elements of pain, loss and a nostalgia for a certain lost or near-lost “authentic” past that deeply inflect their recollection of their father's non-normativity.

Trudy has a complex analysis of her Jewish identity – one that is quite developed, and also belies some unarticulated longings. For her, Jewish identity was about carrying the pain of her mother. “I felt the world was against us,” she says, “and I also saw that we were in more pain to begin with, we were just more pained people. And I think – looking at what had just happened, because we were post-war babies, and look at my mom, because my mom was about pain – I, of course, was very protective of her, very protective of Jews, and I just wanted to destroy the oppressors. Just wanted to destroy them.”

Indeed, this is a repetition of Ruth's production of Jewish identity *in relief*, one generation on. The generational divide, of course, changes the emotional and social content of it deeply. The content of Trudy's Jewish identity was a Jewish articulation of secular humanism - “education is important. Life is important – this is not about the afterlife, it's about being in life, taking part in life and doing good deeds.” Religion was completely absent - “there was very little about God. It

wasn't about religion. And the temple we belonged to for awhile was a reform temple, which in the eyes of a lot of Orthodox Jews isn't even Jewish. It was those values and morays, but not really a faith.”

Jewishness, thus, was not a religious identity for Trudy, but an orientation. However, she notes, it is also genealogical/historical in its content – not *just anyone* with “Jewish cultural values” is a Jew; rather, it is “a birthright.” It is defined not only by values but by heredity – you are a Jew if you are “born to a Jewish mother” - and historical memory.

Trudy recalls her early thoughts on the Nazi holocaust. She says,

I watched everything I shouldn't have watched, because no one was watching me – and watching this thing, it was footage from WWII, it was some documentary and it was unbelievably painful, and, you know, I didn't see it again until I went to the holocaust museum as an adult and saw these pictures of these people who were skin and bones, just ladled onto trucks, dead, and sitting in pits, and, you know, people who have clearly been starved, and all I could think of when I looked at them was “my mother – they would have done that to my mother.” I was carrying it.

It is important to note that Trudy converted to Christianity in college and was baptized a few years ago. Her Christianity emerged from experiences she had finding and assembling a chosen family just after she left home. She notes, “I wanted a father. I wanted parents. I was going to have to find it out of this world. I wanted that sense of unconditional love that I didn't have, I wanted that sense of safety, I wanted something larger than me that I could believe in, that could help me survive, and I started shopping for faith.”

The faith that she found – the parents that she found in Christian conceptions of god – appears to fly in the face of the Jewish identity *in relief to Christianity* that her mother was so invested in. Yet Trudy articulates her Jewish identity as a result of something inherent, something both intangible and *in the blood*. When asked “What happens to your Jewishness as a Christian?,” she answers:

It goes unperturbed...If the holocaust were going on now – if there were pogroms going on now, and I was in Poland, and they were breaking the windows of the temples and they were rounding up the Jews, I'd be there. I'd be there. They'd round me up. And this is

what people have to remember – that my mother doesn't get. She wants to personalize the Holocaust for herself. She doesn't realize – the Holocaust is personal for every Jew. It should be personal for every human being, just like genocide going on anywhere should be personal for every human being. Because, you know, there but for the grace of god go I. We're not exempt from this. You and I would've have Jewish stars burned into our hands. I was born to a Jewish mother, I'm Jewish, I don't try to lie about it, I don't try to disown it. It's part of who I am, it's part of my cells. The Jewish history is my history. invested in.

There is a deep longing in Trudy's articulation of her Jewish identity as transmitted from her mother, both explicit - “I wanted a father. I wanted parents” - implicit in her ambivalent relationship to this history of suffering and pain, a “birthright” she is prepared to carry but not, it seems, without a larger, more clearly articulated super-structure. This same deep longing exists in my mother's recollection of her Jewish identity.

My mother talks about her early inculcation in Jewish identity in terms of both “values” and racialized identities. “I don't think I ever knew a really Semitic Jew,” she says, “I guess I knew that those people existed, but I didn't know any. It was definitely Jews as whites.” A Jew, she learned, “is somebody who values learning, is good to his/her own people, knows that he is a Jew, understands the importance of Israel, knows that Jews come first.” She understands this in opposition in religion. “It wasn't like 'a Jew is somebody who believes in one god' or 'a Jew reads the Old Testament' or 'a Jew fasts on Yom Kippur' – those things...,” she says. She continues, “we never ever ever celebrated any holidays. Ever. I didn't know about – there were Jewish traditions that I'd never heard of.”

My mother blames much of this lack – the lack of religion, of coherent identity, of connection to “ethnic” Jewishness – to her mother's insistence on separating their family from her father's relatives, who, it seems, had purchase on a more “authentic” Jewishness through both their appearance and their spirituality. “Now my dad's family,” she says, “they were more into religion. They observed religion. They saw it as more than cultural – they thought of themselves as identifying with the religious ceremony. They also looked a little different – they were darker,

a little more traditional Jewish looking.”

Indeed, my mother suggests her Jewish identity – which she notes as somewhat “under threat” in her neighborhood growing up, rife as it was with both Jews who were practicing the Jewish religion and devout Catholics – would've been safer and more thoroughly defined had she had more contact with her father's side of the family. “Now, retrospectively, you know what would've made the biggest difference, much more than going to Sunday school?,” she says, “Here's just one thing – if we had been associated with our family on my dad's side. Because then we would've had a better sense of what being Jewish was.”

Trudy felt she lacked both “nurturing” parents and a “nurturing” religion – and, importantly, she ties the two together in noting that Christianity functioned to fill that lack; my mother feels she lacked authentic purchase on Jewish identity by being denied access to her father's “more traditional Jewish looking” and “more religious” family. Taken in the context of another statement by my mother, an interesting tacit portrait of my grandfather begins to emerge.

When I began my interview with my mother, I introduced some of the concepts of Jewish identity that I was working with. Explaining my conception of this project – which, I'll admit, has changed dramatically since it began – I said, “I want to look at how Jews became white, how Jews became upper class, and how that relates to different ideas of what crazy is, particularity since Jews were, for so long, understood as inherently, genetically crazy.”

She responded with the following:

I told you about my theory about Jews and craziness...The inherently more neurotic crazy Jews survived – I mean, I think about people living in Germany who said, look, this is ridiculous, we're going to stay here, and were like, normal and not neurotic...the ones who got out early, though, they were self-selected for survival

In Trudy and my mother's articulation, their father Oscar was one of “the inherently more neurotic and crazy Jews” - or, in my articulation (as “inherent” qualities are ascriptions/products of certain social environments), the Jews whose behavior/identity best fit modern conceptions of

“the neurotic” or, rather, “the hysteric.” Yet he did not “survive” - when my mother and Trudy talk about him, he becomes “a tragedy.”

In some ways, I believe that in describing and mourning for their “crazy” and “tragic” father, Trudy and my mother identify him with a mythic “authentic” Jewish past for which they are vicariously nostalgic, as it somehow *did not survive*. I believe that much of this has to do with a tacit awareness of their mother's relationship to Oscar's queered gendering – but, as they were born into a “white world,” and experienced little to no active anti-Semitism by their own estimation, they see the attempt to destroy/devalue Oscar's non-normative gendering/Jewish “feminization” as a “tragedy” rather than a survival mechanism.

As I noted with Ruth, it is important to keep in mind here that I am drawing broad conjecture from what Trudy and my mother *say* rather than producing truth-equations on the implications of *what happened in their lives*. This is a crucial distinction; I am going to repeat their general characterizations of their father to try and tease out an analysis of their relationship to Jewish identity, but I will not attempt to enter and unpack their recollection of *why* Oscar was in the hospital or *what happened* to them while he was there. This is, in part, because I find it too difficult to repeat these stories over and over, especially when I feel that they are *not mine*, and, in part, because I think it isn't useful. Regardless, I never want to forget how difficult their early lives were, how traumatizing and sad it is to desire love and affection and feel that it is either impossible (as was the case with their mother) or that it has been withdrawn (as was the case with their father, when he was hospitalized and before). I never want to lose sight of the fact that they are, first and foremost, survivors. I am attempting to unpack narratives rather than situations, stories rather than emotions. These dialectics are, of course, as necessary as they are blurry, false and temporary. *May the walls hold as long as I need them to.*

Trudy speaks of her father as “a very anxious person. He was very nervous about being a

breadwinner, and they were depression kids, so there was always all this anxiety and fear.” She continues, “See, my dad, he could be unfair that way, but there was real emotion coming from him.” “He was sort of mama's boy,” she says, and “kind of a hypochondriac.” But, she notes, “he had been the one who had been actually functioning in the world until all hell broke loose.”

My mother tells a similar story. To her, her father was “social,” “funny,” “smart,” and “sensitive.” She says,

I saw him [Oscar] as a tragic man. Because his father was difficult, uncommunicative, etc, my dad was always asked to be the man of the house. My dad was very insecure, and a sensitive and creative person – he would've been a musician, if he had been able to. It always made him anxious to have that role. And so there was some innate resentment, because my dad had to make sure things were taken care of, go to work, all that, while his considerably younger brother was treated like the little prince, was encouraged to go to college, became very successful, all that

This depiction of Oscar – a man who is trying to be the breadwinner, trying to hold the family together, but failing at normative tropes of heterosexual masculinity because of his “sensitivity,” “creativity,” and “emotion” (as well as his lack of a normatively “feminine” partner) - recalls the same discourses of “hysteria” and queerness that inflect Ruth's characterizations. The tone and emotional register of this picture that my mother and Trudy paint – as well as its sociopolitical relevance in the context of their whitened Jewish identities – differ greatly.

Daniel Boyarin writes,

For traditional Jewry, there were both alternative civilities, *Edelkayt*, and alternative paradigms of 'manliness' that could be summed up in the relatively modern term *mensch*. *Edelkayt*, which means 'nobility,' was a counter-ideal to many of the makers of the noble in romantic culture, in that its primary determinants within the culture were delicacy and gentleness, not bravery and courtliness. (1997, 36)

He continues,

The image of the ideal male as nonaggressive, not strong, not physically active is a positive product of the self-fashioning of rabbinic masculinity in a certain, very central, textual product of the culture, the Babylonian Talmud. Far from being a desperate grab for some kind of self-esteem in a powerless situation, this development, as I see it, is the product of a kind of knowledge perhaps available only to the (relatively) powerless. (1997, 81)

Interestingly, both Trudy and my mother idealize my grandfather's “delicacy” and

“gentleness” in a tone quite reminiscent of the “*mensch*”; further, Trudy notes that her father was “a liberal” and “a humanitarian” and that her mother was “a conservative” and “very backwards” even as she claimed the liberal humanism of “Jewish cultural morays.” Interestingly, Boyarin attributes the “gentle, recessive, nonviolent masculinity” of “the *mensch*” - the figure replaced/destroyed by “the muscle Jew” - as a sort of democratic political project (1997, 82). He writes

My interest is in the possibility that here and there amidst appropriation we may find a genuine attempt on the part of men to divest themselves of power over women, an attempt born in part of their own experience of being dominated and the understanding of domination that it furnishes. (1997, 83)

It seems possible, to me, that in Trudy and my mother's depiction of the “tragedy” of their father, there might be a trace of longing for a sort of Jewish political project of non-violent masculinity, one which, in Trudy and my mother's memory is tied to a sort of “authentic” and perhaps “spiritual” past.

Larry was born “difficult” into these difficult times; Larry's madness was constructed against the landscape of these different, gendered notions of madness, in a family where “tragedy” was being actively cultivated and combated in story and in life. In many ways, children are first and foremost forced to take the shape of their containers.

Larry was born into a landscape of highly contested masculinities; also, as the white Jewish son of what Ruth seems to describe as a “failed” (Jewish) man, he was subject to slightly different mandates than Oscar. Larry was born in 1960; the war was over, Israel had been founded, and the whiteness of Ashkenazi secular Jews in North America had been all but won. Rather than make an attempt to “muscle” Zionist sensibilities out of him, Ruth, in response to what I will later argue was changing mythological positions for Jewish identity at the time, became deeply invested in his capacity for culture and intellectual production, his “genius.”

Ruth never speaks of Larry in the kinds of pathologizing, angry tones that she uses to

describe Oscar. She never psychiatrizes him – in fact, she seems to have protected him, in many ways, from psychiatrization. She sent him to “MEDICAL doctors” rather than psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, and deeply resisted his psychopathologization. “He wasn’t crazy,” she says. Interestingly, her relationship to his “difference” is predicated not only on his “genius,” but also his masculinity *in relief* to “the girls.”

“I always knew he was smart,” she says, “but he was difficult. Unlike the girls. He had some strange ways.” She continues:

He was okay, except he wasn't terribly friendly child. Maybe he took it from me, I don't know. No, he – the one thing about him that I could not understand was that he was very difficult to train on the toilet. I hear that boys are moreso than girls. I don't know. So I thought, well, it's a boy. Maybe he's just a five year old, or a four year old. But other than that, I never saw real signs of screwiness in him. He was different, he loved mathematics, and he excelled with highest honors and masters in math.

Somehow, for Ruth, masculinity, “genius” and difference become mythologically conflated on the surface of Larry's body. They appear in ambivalent relief to Oscar. She says,

Even when he was a kid, the teachers would say, “he's a whiz at math, he doesn't even have to put it on paper.” even Oscar took him once to the baseball game, and they were figuring out averages and – ha – Oscar was a little annoyed I think, because Larry got the answer immediately without paper and my husband, you know, Oscar was figuring it out. But, I think he was a genius. A lot of geniuses are strange.

Trudy and my mother are more apt to characterize Larry in the psychiatric terms more common to their discursive landscape. Quietly ascribing so-called “mental illness” to bio-medical “nature,” my mother wonders whether Larry was “born with problems,” and sometimes describes his “obsessive behavior” in terms of things that went “undiagnosed” or “untreated.” Trudy is more apt to describe Larry's “difficult” life in psychoanalytic, sociological and emotional terms – his “behaviors and eruptions” were, for Trudy, part of a “weird, enmeshed...war dance” Larry was doing with Ruth, an attempt to get attention as the child who was left “unclaimed” - but there is a similarly distinct differentiation between the nostalgia/tragedy she sees connected to her father, and the frustration she feels at Larry's refusal to “get help.” Of course, this is, in many ways, due

to how differently Trudy and my mother are positioned in relation to their father (as his children) than to Larry (as his older sisters); it also, I believe, emerges from their positionality as already-white Jews in the landscape of the increasing bio-medicalization of subjectivity over the 20th century.

For my mother and Trudy, I believe that Oscar was tacitly discursively connected to a mythic Jewish past. Larry, however, represented the promise of the future – his “genius,” his staunch ethics, his investment in what seems to be a certain secular Jewish legacy of “humanism” all promised a way forward for “authentic” white Jewish identity, wherein “ethnic” religious coherence is neatly supplanted by a hereditary purchase on genius and morality. However, like Oscar, for Trudy and my mother, Larry both failed to achieve this promise, and was failed by the oppressive structures that surrounded him.

Somehow, later, I emerged from all this.

Chapter Five: Critical Race/Erasure

They're All Made Out of Ticky-Tacky

Boundaries are an essential, defining component of hegemonic subjectivity and spatiality. Respectable subjectivity is made through the production and management of deviance. The production of both respectable and racialized subjects is part of making the nation as white. In spatial terms, these concepts enable segregation, policing of boundaries, mobility for some and marginalization for others.

-Zoe G. Newman, Whitening the Inner City: The Containment of Toronto's Degenerate Spaces and the Production of Respectable Subjects.

We always are our skin. We always are already more. Our skin is already always more than we know it to be. My grandmother was a Jew. She was not quite white. My mother, it's safe to say, is a white Jew – that is, she is a Jew and a white person. I am a white person. (I'm also Jewish). What I mean is, this all has, and is, a history.

The equation isn't simple. The story is fragmented, multiple, angular, contradictory. My grandmother had rocks thrown at her in elementary school; she feared the loss of jobs, withstood harassment on the street. My grandmother spent her entire life at odds with the non-Jewish world. My grandmother was guided by the rudder of Jewish middle class access – she docked her life and family on the shores of increasing financial stability, security. My grandmother lived her adult life in a community more or less of her choosing. She retired comfortably. She isn't afraid of the police or the government – she never was – and she currently bears a deeply racist resentment towards anyone who would deign their marginality greater or more sustained than that of *the Jews*. She is fairly certain that Jews have suffered *the most*. She carries long-worn fear and righteousness to bed with her every night, in the house that she owns.

Me, well, I grew up white. Upper West Side of Manhattan – above the park, below Harlem white. Unquestionably. The New York I knew was the “geography of colonialism” (Lawrence and Dua, 2005, 122); I came to know myself in and through the ongoing colonial encounter that constitutes daily life in so-called America. This colonial encounter produced me

and taught me to understand myself as a white citizen, entitled to reap the “benefits” of the racist state. No one ever threw rocks at me.

Is blood the body? Is skin? It is not my body alone that ties me to my family, nor to the production of my racial identity in this world (though it seems that there are a set of metaphysical questions contained in the notion of “body alone” that time, space and the general confines of language render impossible to thoroughly address here). However, clearly there is something in the (idea and “science” of the) blood, something on the (idea and visual mark of the) skin that puts me in my discursive place. My unquestionable whiteness and bracketed Jewish identity are spatial and temporal productions; that is, they exist because of and in direct relation to those who came before me and the specific contexts of the times and spaces in which they and I live/d. I am, and am not, a unique snowflake.

As far as I can tell, identities cannot be mapped on a spectrum; though I am unquestionably white and inhabit an oppressor identity while my grandmother was (and perhaps still is, though I would argue against it) an ambiguously racialized Jew, I am not definitively *whiter than* my grandmother by some measurable and quantifiable degree. My whiteness, rather, is intrinsically connected to my grandmother's identity – and to the racialized identities of all other people in my discursive/ geographical/historical community – in a way that is mapped on a terrain, a landscape of both physical and historical geography, time and governmentality. My personal whiteness – and, as a result, the potential for my accountability to it – materializes in relation to New York, to my particular body. My New York, in turn, exists only in relation to, among other things, the Chicago that came before it – the Treiman Chicago – just as my sense of my body relies on my interpretation of my grandmother, my aunt, my mother. Of course, family stories and geographies are not the only factors that determine identity. I am also of my own authorship, just as I am the author of my interpretation of the stories of others.

How I have understood or failed to understand those who came before me is my responsibility. There are always near-infinite factors determining our access to the histories that make us. In this case, I would like to offer a measly two. *Just for starters*. Let me tell you a story of my skin and 1968. It starts with a tattoo and it ends with the coincidence that is this project. It is, I hope, a way of reaching towards the stories that make me (the stories that my grandmother, aunt and mother tell) and the ways I have learned to make stories of my own (my analysis of their stories).

For years, I was terrified of tattoos. As thoughts trapped in ink and skin, they seemed to me all about stasis, fracture and mortality. I didn't want my body to be a museum, to carry an inky reminder of its own impermanence. *When we're gone, who will our skin sing to then?*

Of course, I wanted little to do with my body in general for most of my adolescence and early adulthood, in life or imagined death – dealing with my body meant dealing with queerness of all shapes and sizes that I didn't yet have language for. I felt incongruous and strange. Surely, getting a tattoo would make that worse. Plus, I couldn't get buried in a Jewish cemetery with a tattoo.

I did get one, though. A few, actually. I got my first when I was 21 and living in New York. It was – it is – a Situationist image lifted from the walls of the Sorbonne, in Paris. I had an obsessive interest in the Situationist International at the time; that Paris-based group of anti-capitalist/anarcho-Marxist artists and agitators with a critique of spectacular production was incredibly appealing and foundational to me in the early years of critical consciousness. The image was, of course, from the Situationist year of ubiquity – the year that is tattooed onto the gray matter of most North American organizers and radicals – 1968. *We are always making our bodies relevant, whether we want to or not.*

A friend of mine talks about his tattoos as a forced confrontation with history. “I know I’ll probably hate a lot of my tattoos when I’m forty,” he says. “Sometimes that scares me. But then I remember – I got those tattoos as a way of reminding the stuffy, forty-year-old me what this version of me liked. It’s sort of a ‘fuck you’ to forty-year-old me. I should remember that I don’t really care what he thinks.”

I think of my 1968 tattoo in much the same way – my body is now permanently marked with a reminder of the way I romanticized, glorified and idealized a certain historical site. I never knew – never thought to ask – what my family was doing that year. Now, when people ask me about that tattoo and its connection with 1968, I’ll tell a different story.

As for the wider world, so it is true for my family. We Treimans are tattooed by 1968. The year that was etched into my consciousness through stories of the DNC and Paris aflame is etched into the memories of my mother, aunt and grandmother. It was a deciding moment in their lives – “an earthquake,” as Trudy says. They return, again and again in their stories, to 1968. It was the year Oscar was in the hospital, the year Martin Luther King was shot and Chicago’s West and South Side erupted. It was the year they moved. It was the year they “lost the neighborhood.”

If identities are produced in and by their space, time and stories, then my whiteness, among other (interlocking) things, relies in great part on my family’s memory of Chicago, on the racial identities and racialized memories of the generation that came before me (my mother, my aunt, Larry) and on the specter of 1968. It was, as my mother says, “a very loaded year.”

Everyone is determined by and in relation to their landscape. My mother and aunt, however, articulate a particularly acute and uniquely explicit identification with their geography. “Karen and Trudy and I and the other kids on the block, we had our own world, independent of the adults. We created our own society,” my mother says. “*All we knew* was that we had this

wonderful neighborhood (emphasis mine)” she continues “it was our refuge from our houses, we knew every inch of it, we had explored every inch of it.” In 1968, however, everything changed. “It was going to be taken away from us,” my mother says.

In the late 1960s, Chicago's South Side was changing. As a result of a number of interlocking factors – shifts in the ghettoized Chicago housing market, increasing upward mobility for working class “ethnic” white folks and a racist money-making real estate scheme called “block-busting” - the area my mother and aunt knew as “the prairie,” as the Jewish and Catholic first and second generation American “refuge” abruptly changed in demographic. The sudden availability of housing on the South Side to African Americans put the “ethnic” white enclave in contact with people of color at a time when racialization was changing immensely. Identities were thrown into sharp relief, and the neighborhood – and, I posit, the memories and subjectivities of my family members – changed profoundly in the encounter. In the wake of these demographic shifts – and following what is remembered as the “race riots” after Martin Luther King's brutal assassination – my family and many others moved to neighborhoods on the North Side of Chicago in a process now remembered as “white flight.” In many ways, I believe that the my grandmother, mother and aunt stories constitute a site at which Jews became white *in their own self-assessment*. I would argue that Jews were functionally white before, at least at certain sites, at least *in relief*.

Richard Dyer writes of the “conceptual closeness between Jewish and really white coloring” (1997, 57). He continues “The uncertainty over their color means that at different times Jews may be fully assigned to one side or the other” (ibid). According to Karen Brodtkin's How Jews Became White Folks, among many other texts, the project of Jewish whiteness was accomplished *in relief* to the increasing calcification of the racialization of non-Europeans over the 20th century (1998). In Unheroic Conduct, Daniel Boyarin speaks of Freud - “the Other and

the metropolitan, the 'Semite' among Aryans,” as a “Jew desperately constructing his own whiteness through an othering of the colonized blacks” (1997, 262). It is my belief that 1968, “white flight,” and my family's recollection of their “changing” neighborhood represents the moment where my aunt and mother were confronted with their own whiteness accomplished. However, it is/was a dense and ambivalent moment.

In taking seriously the charge of accountability for myself, I have put myself in strange and potentially irresponsible relationship to the complex, contextual realities of the stories of my family. There must be a space in which the real emotional landscape of my mother, aunt and grandmother – their fear, their sense of danger, their loss - and their complicity in the project of whiteness can coexist; a space in which my complicity in whiteness can be both a product of my historical circumstance and a project of my own, autonomously.

In “Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George,” Sherene Razack sketches a trajectory of the racialized colonial management of space in North America. She writes:

Colonizers at first claim the land of the colonized as their own through a process of violent eviction, justified by notions that the land was empty or populated by peoples who had to be saved or civilized. In the colonial era, such overt racist ideologies and their accompanying spatial practices (confinement to reserves, for example) facilitate the near absolute geographical separation of the colonizer from the colonized. At the end of the colonial era, and particularly with the urbanization in the 1950s and 60s, the segregation of urban space replaces these earlier spatial practices: slum administration replaces colonial administration. The city belongs to the settlers and the sully of civilized society through the presence of the racial Other in white space gives rise to a careful management of boundaries within urban space. (2000, 97)

In taking an historical look at the city of Chicago, it is relatively easy to indict the banks, real estate agents, police and mayor Daley as (colonial) slum administrators extraordinaire. It is somewhat more difficult to locate my mother, aunt and grandmother within the binary logic of the colonizer and the colonized. They were children, or, in the case of Ruth, parents. They were/are

white people. They were/are women. They were/are Jews. Colonizer, colonized. The racism that I see in my grandmother's stories – the good intentions, struggle and ambivalent I see in the words of my mother and aunt – these are all products of my particular place in this history. We are all always coming from somewhere.

The stories my mother and aunt tell about 1968 speak of the trauma they encountered and the scrap-heap magic they built in their difficult childhoods. What my grandmother recalls is laced with the gendered violence and anti-Semitism she experienced, alongside her own racist Zionism. Their stories speak genuinely of community, of fracture, of pain. They also speak with the voice of Jewish liminality and complicity in race-based oppression. In many ways, in their narratives and lives, my mother and aunt specifically provide the bridge between the marginalization of secular Ashkenazi Jews in North America and their total absorption into dominant white identity.

There are undeniable traces in these stories of longing for the lost urban shtetl. This imaginary production is a crucial factor in the maintenance of *white* – this emphasis is important – modern secular Ashkenazi Jewish identity in urban North America; that is, this myth is something that is crucial to my identity, and the identity of other New York (and, I would argue, Chicago) Jews. It is a uniquely modern phenomenon, one that emerges out of the recollection of the “Old World.” As Rebecca Kobrin asserts in “The Shtetl by the Highway,” Jewish immigrant anxiety in the face of anti-Semitism and the mandate towards assimilation in America helped to foster a literary and discursive culture that encouraged “reinvention of the East European metropolis-as-shtetl or as a 'mother-land'” (2006, 108). The collective memory of the Eastern European shtetl became, briefly, the organizing logic for Jewish life and Jewish sensibility in Yiddish Ashkenazi immigrant culture in North American cities. It is my belief that the longing for the lost urban shtetl arose from this collective memory. Rather than attempting to locate

“authenticity” in the “Old World” or in religious commitment, I believe that *Jews like me* experience a simultaneous mourning for and essentialism of a mythic urban shtetl – a site that existed, though not, surely, quite as it is currently remembered, in some North American (and Western European) cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This lost urban shtetl is a “primary site of Jewish memory,” an “idealized immigrant world” that is associated with Yiddish-speaking poor urban Jewish communities (Wenger, 1997, 4). It is “a neighborhood once teeming with life and feverish activity, rich in movements and 'isms,' and marked by squalor, poverty, and sordidness, by energy, ambition, and idealism,” and constitutes both an historical reality and, simultaneously, an “ethnic image” that was “manufactured and managed” through “sentiment and romanticism” (Wenger, 1997, 12).

There were – and still are – legitimately exciting and/or highly politicized and/or marginalized complex communities of Jewish immigrants and first-generation Americans living in poverty in North American urban spaces. Jewish immigration has continued – a notable recent wave began in the 1970s, when Jews fled what was then the Soviet Union in the wake of discriminatory taxes and the attempt to shut down borders. However, the myth of the lost urban shtetl does not allow for the possibility of a current shtetl-culture, or a fluid and shifting Jewish immigrant identity. Rather, it asserts a long-lost sense of past belonging to a marginalized ethnic identity in a way that, paradoxically, functions to further Jewish whiteness.

Alain Finkelkraut writes “a fundamental chasm exists between me and the history of my people” (1994, 33). Indeed, I believe that this is the predicament of many modern Jews – there is a pervasive sense of “inauthenticity,” a feeling that Jews were torn from historically appropriate space. In some manifestations, this is a response to the displacement, Diaspora and forced assimilation to which Jews have been subjected. In the myth of the lost urban shtetl, however, the story is that “authentic” Jewish identity lies in a historically bounded and static space. There is a

sense that I “real” Jewish identity has somehow been “lost.”

As far as I can tell, the mythological status of the “authentic” Jewish past that emerges in the collective imaginary of lost urban shtetl functionally furthers the assimilation of secular Ashkenazi Jews into dominant whiteness by both inventing and exoticizing a static historical “authentic” Jew/Jewish life and un-marking/homogenizing/de-historicizing whiteness. It is, in a sense, a complicated form of what Renato Rosaldo calls “imperialist nostalgia.” He writes

Curiously enough, agents of colonialism – officials, constabulary officers, missionaries, and other figures from whom anthropologists ritually dissociate themselves -often display nostalgia for the colonized culture as it was “traditionally” (that is, when they encountered it). The peculiarity of their yearning, of course, is that agents of colonialism long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed. Therefore, my concern resides with a particular kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed. Imperialist nostalgia revolves around a paradox: a person kills somebody, then mourns the victim. (1989, 69)

He continues

“We” (who believe in progress) valorize innovation, and then yearn for more stable worlds, whether these reside in our own past, in other cultures or in the conflation of the two. Such forms of longing thus appear closely related to secular notions of progress. When the so-called civilizing process destabilizes forms of life, the agents of change experiences transformations of other cultures as if they were personal losses. (1989, 70/1)

In the case of the mythic urban shtetl, the nostalgia and mourning are not for a colonized Other, per say, but for an imagined – and fairly recent – ancestor, a “more authentic” Jew replaced by a whiteness/inauthenticity that becomes de-historicized and un-marked through the ascription of “authenticity,” “ethnicity” and “vibrant culture” to the past. It puts Jews in interesting and profoundly ambivalent relation to both colonizer and colonized identities and, I believe, also sets the stage for some currents of “liberal” and “intellectual” white Jewish identity that valorize “progressive thought” and “multi-cultural education” while maintaining a colonial relationship to racialized communities through the essentialism and exoticization of the “ethnic.” Though it is not, perhaps, strictly what Renato Rosaldo was criticizing in the articulation of “imperialist

nostalgia,” it is an interesting tool for thinking through the normative way of being a modern Ashkenazi secular Jew; that is, the way in which the lost mythic shtetl is idealized and erased of its lived diversity towards the homogenization of contemporary Jewish identity. This is a tendency I intend to unpack at length in looking at my own formal and informal education.

While there are elements of this particular kind of cultural longing in the stories of my mother, aunt and grandmother, I believe that they are somewhat more complexly positioned. The past that my mother, grandmother and aunt recall/mourn is not quite the “mythic shtetl,” but an historically specific liminal space in which “ethnic” white people co-existed in what my mother calls “multi-cultural” coalition – until they were brought in contact with people of color who were experiencing racialization in different and increasingly more violent ways. It was an uncomfortable and complicated historical moment – one which I am invested in looking at with a careful self-awareness that allows for historical analysis alongside sensitive, ethical treatment of the difficult stories my family tells.

Richard Phillips writes, “to unmap literally is to denaturalize geography, hence to undermine world views that rest upon it” (in Razack, 2000, 91). I suggest this look into the stories and sites of Jewish whitening as a kind of “unmapping,” indebted but not equivalent to Phillips'. I do not believe it is possible for me to “undermine” the world views that have made the maps of me – providing context for my own ability to provide context for myself is a tautological gesture, and quite a mouthful besides. Rather, I want to enter and attempt to unpack this particular map of my history by offering up some *things I think I know*, recognizing that they likely reveal more about how I have come to know than they do about “actual” history.

There are some things about the site-specific discourse analysis that follows that I think are just plain funny, in that they are unexpected, and, in some ways, run counter to my larger project. First, I will be focusing on the spatialized production of whiteness, as if race can be

looked at on a landscape without gender, desire, orientation, class, perceived ability, and so on. I cannot tell whether I have simply laid down my arms for a moment and lived within the limits of language, or whether I have genuinely “copped out,” as they say, of intersectional analysis. That remains to be seen. The second “funny” in this section is the rather flip way in which I use the personal stories of my family to foment -and, perhaps in some cases, stand in for – broader sociocultural analysis. My family is not a mouthpiece for Jewish identity, no matter how many times I might use their words to access and theorize bigger discursive structures. They are simply the only access I have. The conscience of it is tricky. I trust if I'm *doing it wrong* then someone will tell me.

And They All Look Just The Same

As far as I can see it, my mother and aunt had an intense encounter with their own whiteness sometime in or around 1968. This is, of course, my interpretation. In the confrontation between neighborhood demographics and the fallout of changes in ghettoized city planning, they found themselves produced *in relief*. Though the moment that seems to have occurred for them speaks towards a broader understanding of Jewish self conception, Jews occupied a space of whiteness, albeit ambivalently, long before that moment of fracture.

Irving Cutler writes, “By 1930, there were almost 300,000 Jews [in Chicago] – Chicago then had the third largest Jewish population of any city in the world – exceeded only by New York and Warsaw” (1996, 1). Most Jews had settled on the West Side – in what my mother calls “the shtetl” or on the South Side. Though there was a dramatic concentration of Jewish immigrants and first or second generation Americans in these areas, they did not constitute the entire demographic of these neighborhoods. The “assignment” of Jewish racial identity has been, in many ways, determined by their proximity to racialized others.

Most of the Jews who settled in Chicago's West and South Side lived in tenement

apartments or small homes. It seems that, though many lived in poverty, the particular kind of poverty that they lived in often allowed them to retain independence from welfare institutions and public housing. As a result, it seems safe to assume that access to upward mobility, autonomy and the benefits of public infrastructure were extended to Jews in ways denied to African Americans, who, on Chicago's South Side, were increasingly housed in “small, low-rise public housing projects on open land toward the periphery of developed zones” (Abu-Lughod 2007, 67). There are few historical accounts of Jews in public housing infrastructure – I have been unable to find any. According to Janet L. Abu-Lughod's Race, Space and Riots in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles, it seems that the systemic impoverishment of black Chicagoans through the racist policing, education and employment infrastructures pushed them into public housing. In the 1940s and 1950s, Chicago Housing Authority buildings were constructed in low-income areas, creating what has been called “the black belt.”

Interestingly, the many histories of Jewish life in Chicago, from Irving Cutler's The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb to the Chicago History Museum's “Encyclopedia of Chicago,” remember racial tension and conflict in “black” and “white.” Though Jews under unique and discrete scrutiny or analysis are constituted as ethnic immigrants marginalized in the 20th century urban landscape, they/we become *white in relief* in the historical accounts of racist violence perpetrated by white Chicagoans. Indeed, Jews belong not only discursively to that history, but, at many points, were individual participants in racist violence.

Janet Abu-Lughod writes, “However, each one of these [public housing projects] raised the ire of white neighbors when black families were moved in or their assignment was anticipated. In 1947, for example, there was an 'antiblack' riot at Airport Homes, and another in Fernwood Park the following year, indicating that whites would enforce apartheid by violence, if necessary” (2007, 67).

She continues:

The 1949 Urban Redevelopment Act initiated a federal program, ostensibly designed to clear 'blighted areas' and to stimulate their rebuilding with improved but still affordable housing. The scheme, however, had several basic defects. First, clearance was to be undertaken at a time of a critical housing shortage and overcrowding in the so-called blighted areas, which were then disproportionately occupied by minorities...cities were empowered to select, condemn and clear areas that they determined to be 'blighted,' which left the criteria vulnerable to decisions that depended more on potential real estate profits than on objective measures of relative deterioration. Second, private developers were invited to buy the city-cleared land at bargain prices, in return for promising to build decent housing for poor or middle-income tenants..this opened enormous opportunities for collusion between the city and major real estate interests. Furthermore, there were only loose controls over the uses to which the improved land could be put. Eventually, redevelopers concentrated on more profitable middle-income housing, or even high-income housing and commercial uses, rather than the affordable housing the law had required them to provide in return for their subsidies and generous loan terms. (2007, 70)

The 1949 Urban Redevelopment Act set the stage for what would later become Chicago's wave of blockbusting and subsequent "white flight." My mother was born in 1952. Unbeknownst to her, what Abu-Lughod refers to as a "low-intensity war," mounted by city bureaucrats, developers and real-estate agents (among others), was raging "between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s" (2007, 79). She, my mother, in the early years knew only cramped quarters, shifting borders and family life of the Jewish ghetto. In her memory, and that of my aunt, the family seems to have become ambivalently white upon their move from the "shtetl" on the West Side to the "ethnic white neighborhood" on the South Side. They did not, however, become the kind of "inauthentic" white (Jews) of modern secular Ashkenazi thought until they moved to the richer, more homogeneous and arguably more suburban North Side.

"When I was born," my mother says, "we were living on the west side of Chicago in what was then the Jewish ghetto of Chicago. It's kind of comparable to the way the Lower East Side was in New York. It was a very very overcrowded, completely Jewish, tenement neighborhood." It was "the shtetl," she asserts. "The old Jewish kind of shtetl, on the West side of Chicago."

She did not, however, come of age there. “After WWII,” she says, “there was a lot of very very cheap housing on the south side of Chicago, which really had been totally undeveloped. It was prairie – wild land.” She continues:

I guess my dad must have gotten – maybe at the who's who job – no, he was working at Vincenz hardware and he thought it would be smart to get a house, rather than living in a crowded apartment in the shtetl.\

My aunt also describes the neighborhood on the south side as “the prairie.” She says,

It was actually a prairie. It was not that far off the lake – we were east, we were on the south east side. If you went further east, you got into this real industrial area, where there was, you know, the skyway, and you would head into Indiana. But where we were – we were sort of south of Hyde Park, so we were sort of outside the intelligentsia community. But for the most part, it was families, real cheap new houses sprouting up out of the prairie. There was the lake, and the steel mills were on the lake – a lot of the blue collar people were working in the steel mills – and then, as you worked your way..then there was this undeveloped area that had been prairies before they got into this big building boom.

For my mother, the houses were “little ticky tacky homes – they all looked the same.” My aunt agrees. “Here came this whole pile of ranch homes,” she says, “some bi-level, but mostly ranch, that had these three glass-block windows, three little bedrooms, one bath, you know, very basic, affordable little houses for the new families that were sprouting up.”

“My parents used every penny they had to buy the house,” my mother says. “I remember that, because I remember when I was a kid having newspapers over the windows because we couldn't afford blinds or shades of anything.” “But,” she continues, “the schools were considered good there on the south side of Chicago, because there were all these baby boom kids going there.” It seems essential to note that “baby boom,” in the language of my mother and aunt, might, indeed, be an encoded version of “GI Bill kids.”

Oscar and Ruth followed the migration of Chicago Jews out of the “shtetl” and into the “better neighborhoods.” Trudy says,

There were these little affordable houses sprouting up and the message was that these

were for young, white families to plunk down and have their baby boom babies and work hard and make their kids life better – this was not in any way a well to do neighborhood, but it was a neighborhood that had promise. There was this feeling of, you know, everybody's going to work hard, and we're going to give our kids a better life than we had. We're going to work hard and, you know, education – get them to school. That was the feeling. So all of my friends who became doctors and lawyers and what have you, their parents were plumbers and steel workers.

Both my mother and Trudy confirm that their neighborhood was full of these “white families.” The neighborhood that they remember – the south side that they grew up in – was “Catholic and Jewish.” “It was a mixed neighborhood it was Jewish and Catholics,” my mother says, “with Catholics of various different ethnicities, like Irish Catholics, Italian Catholic, Lithuanian.” But, she confirms, “it was white.”

Often times, Trudy remembers, the neighborhood felt solely Jewish. “There were a lot of Catholic schools around,” she says. “There was sort of a feeling that the Catholic families wanted their kids with their own, they wanted them to go to Catholic school.” She explain this as an early experience of anti-Semitism. It also, it seems, led to a near total homogenization of the public school population. “So what happened was,” she continues, “the neighborhood school was, like, 90% Jewish, and it would be really easy to think that the neighborhood was completely Jewish.”

Beth S. Wenger describes the cultural memory of second-generation Jewish life in New York City as “full of contradictions” (1997, 5). The neighborhood of the Lower East Side, she writes,

represented poverty but also the possibility for upward mobility; it testified to the existence of a vibrant, ethnic culture but also to the ability of Jews to adapt to American society; it enshrined the flavor of the Old World but also housed stores and businesses serving the new American consumer; it celebrated the rapid acculturation of American Jews but also expressed the doubts and frustrations that accompanied the drive for Americanization (ibid).

For my aunt and mother, the south side was a 1950s Chicago version of this New York City cultural memory. Trudy says:

Oh yeah. I mean, I look at my friends – and, of course, we didn't have a family business – but, like, for instance, our friends Mark and Ross Wolfson. There were four Wolfson kids, and I went to school with Ross, and your mom went to school with Mark and, you know, Mark Wolfson's a genius, he's a professor out at Stanford, but his father was our milkman. And – they would literally ride down the street, this little Jewish man in his little truck – and you'd go and get milk from him. And Jeffrey Bearman, who is somebody I became friends with when we reconnected at a reunion, he's a cardiologist down in Knoxville, but his dad was the plumber.

She continues

The idea was, we're going to give our kids, we're going to work our butts off, we grew up during the depression, we had nothing, we're going to encourage our children to go to college and they're going to get the success that...there was never, you know, I know that Jeff Bearman's father never said “you grow up and be a plumber.” I don't think his father had his own business. Or, like, Chester around the block, that was a non-Jewish family – Chester was the one where, if you needed to have your door fixed or if your TV was broken – he was the neighborhood handy man. He had one child, I don't know what she ended up...but everybody was supposed to go to school and get a good job – it wasn't lower class, but nobody had a lot of money.

Their stories are thick with nostalgia and a bone-deep love. They are true stories. They also belie the tense and complex racial dynamics in the South Side – likely because my mother and aunt, being young and determined to find community and belonging outside of their impossible house, simply did not know.

My mother has a sense of the south side's segregation, but it is constituted by the profoundly racialized mapping she was taught. As for the South Side itself, she says,

It was white. However, when you went over the bridge to south Chicago, which was just a few blocks away, it was entirely Latin. At that point, Latin meant Mexican. And when you went a little bit west, it was entirely black. So what happened was that, as they years went on, the gap closed up and the neighborhood became entirely black.

It seems clear that the South Side that my family learned was a white neighborhood. “South Chicago,” constitutively different in their memory, was racialized. It seems that, despite the caveat of “ethnicity,” residents of the “South Side proper” - these Jews and Catholics – were white people. But the South Side as it is understood geographically had a different sort of mapping, one constituted by extreme segregation and a history of violence.

According to the Chicago History Museum's "Encyclopedia of Chicago," the South Side had a significant population of African American residents and institutions, dating back to the decades preceding the Civil War. However, they were subject to extreme residential segregation, confined to a narrow strip in the south-most end of the South Side and denied access to decent housing and many public amenities. Though the "ethnic" white folks of the South Side experienced marginalization and, to a certain degree, lived a ghettoized life, within the context and geography of the South Side itself, they represented and benefited from racism, gaining access to public infrastructure, decent housing and the possibility for social and economic mobility.

The South Side has a history of what has been called "race riots." I am wary of my own use of this term – concerned that when white folks use it without the express direction of people of color, it functions to de-historicize and de-politicize the events that lead to outrage, rioting and property damage in response to racist incidents. Though I think that it potentially does important work to call seemingly discrete or isolated incidents of public unrest into a history of response to institutional racism, when I see it used by my family members, white academics or, frankly, myself, it carries with it the narrative power of white supremacy, and speaks into a discourse in which people of color are constituted, through the white gaze, as people somehow intrinsically "prone to riot" rather than people who are subject to the daily brutalities of racism. I will return to this notion later, when I attempt to take a close look at the events following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and the subsequent departure of my family.

Suffice to say, the South Side was marked by profound racial segregation and a history of violence. The most famous of the so-called "race riots" - or, rather, anti-racist uprisings - occurred between July 27 and August 3, 1919, when white gang violence directed at African Americans who had crossed an invisible line at 29th Street separating customarily segregated "white" and

“black” beaches contributed to the drowning of a black teenagers. Seven days of arsons, beatings and shootings ensued, resulting in 38 deaths and 537 injuries. A significant majority of the death and injuries were sustained by the African Americans South Side residents. This was followed by years of mounting tension and an increase in organized white violence against the Chicago Housing Authority construction of the projects. Famously, in the Chicago suburb of Cicero in 1951, between two and five thousand white residents laid siege to a building that housed a single black family, burning and looting the structure. This was one of Chicago's largest and most well-documented “race riots,” or, rather, violent white power rallies.

By the time my mother was born, the South Side, entrenched in decades of segregation and struggle, was losing its stronghold on industrial production. By 1964, most of the formerly expansive and lucrative meat packing companies had disappeared. Public housing was under construction in the south-most end, while pockets of extreme wealth grew shoulder to shoulder with cheap starter homes marketed to upwardly mobile white working class families.

Nonetheless, it was, for Trudy and my mother, a fantastic place to grow up. In their memories, it was a place of “refuge,” a true sense of home and community that was, if not entirely constituted by, then marked and bounded by its connection to Jewish identity. Trudy says,

You could walk down the street and point to a house and say “The Shulmans, the Grosses, the Jacobs, there's Karen's house, there's the Catholic school kids” -- you didn't always know their names -- “the Rothmans, the Shapiros.” You knew everybody. The houses were animate, they were not inanimate. They had faces on them. The houses represented the families. Everyone had kids, all the kids were born in a certain window, they were all baby boomers, we went to school with their kids and our sisters went to school with their sisters and brothers.

Then, she continues, “all of a sudden the identity left those homes. The people left in the dead of night.”

When Trudy speaks of “the identity” leaving those homes, she is not, of course, claiming that the homes were abandoned. Nor is she, as I understand it, attempting to homogenize and de-

particularize the identities of the families that replaced the Shulmans, Grosses and Catholic School kids of her childhood. Rather, she is pointing to a shift in demographic in the white part of the South Side of Chicago in the late 1960s that dramatically changed her relationship to the neighborhood, and to herself. It culminated in the events of 1968 and, I would argue, in the consolidation of my family's sense of themselves as white people. It was a time of deep racism and upheaval. Unfortunately, in many ways, this moment and, further, the way it has etched itself into collective memory, has helped to functionally shut down many coalition building initiative and ally-relationships between African Americans and Ashkenazi white Jews.

1968

In the late 1960s, the white part of Chicago's South Side – the “refuge” that my mother and aunt grew up in – was “blockbusted.” According to historian Arnold Hirsch's 1983 study Making the Second Ghetto, the process of “blockbusting” - an effort on the part of real-estate agents and speculators in conjunction with city managers to trigger the turnover of white-owned property and homes to African Americans at a jacked-up price, only to later dispossess these same African Americans of these same homes – began as early as 1900, but reached its heyday on Chicago's South Side and West Side in the 1960s. Blockbusting techniques included the repeated—often incessant—urging of white homeowners in areas adjacent to or near black communities to sell before it became “too late” and their property values diminished. Agents frequently hired African American agents or families to walk or drive through neighborhoods – they also hired people to make threatening phone calls and, in some cases, moved in “test families” to trigger racist panic. After purchasing homes at incredibly low prices from fleeing white occupants, the real estate agents then sold the houses at an inflated cost to African American homeowners who were facing discrimination in the housing market and had extremely limited choices. Often times, these real estate agents would enter into relationships with the banks and provide financing or

mortgages with such stringent terms that the homes would be lost by the homeowners within months of their purchase. At that point, many new homeowners would face eviction notices – there were even stories of civil rights activists coming to support recently evicted families and finding armed Chicago Police officers occupying the houses, ready and willing to shoot at any protesters.

My mom explains the atmosphere on the South Side as one of incredible fear. She says:

The change was, that people got scared because there were black families coming close, and so the realtors came in and to hype up, to turn over properties faster, they told people that they had people interested in their houses and they had to sell, they had to sell now or they would lose even more value. "You'll have to sell your house now, we have a family that's interested." And there was this pushing pushing pushing to get houses sold, get people out of the neighborhood. And it was called panic peddling, because basically the people who benefited were the realtors, because anytime there's any transaction, they make a fee. And people would move in the middle of the night – you know, you'd say goodnight to your friends and in the morning they'd be gone and another family would be living there.

Trudy's story of the first black people in her neighborhood – or, at least, the first that she knew – reveals quite a bit about Jewish self-identity at the time, and so I quote at length:

What was happening then – the first black girl in my class, her name was Yvonne Taylor. She was like a woman, she was grown. I don't know how old she was, I don't know if she was a little older than us, but I remember her being very “womanly.” She was in my homeroom – she moved into the area, she lived west of us, but she ended up in my homeroom at Warren, which was my junior high school. I don't remember if she came in 7th or 8th grade, but I became friends with her. We were seated near each other, and I was always interested in people who were, like, not in the mainstream, and I recognized her aloneness. We had another boy – in my homeroom, there were 3 black kids that year: Deborah Moore, Yvonne Taylor and Jim Pickins. Jim Pickins, I can't even describe him, he was kind of nondescript. He was just a boy, and his mom would try to dress him up, but he didn't interact with anybody. Deborah Moore was a little bit of a preppy girl, and when we got to Bowen she became sort of athletic. She was kind of a studious kid. Yvonne had rougher edges – she seemed like she was a little older, and she was kind of worldly, and I took to her right away. She was the first black kid in my classroom, and so, yes, she was my friend.

She continues:

So, the blockbuster program, unbeknownst to us, brought in a family, and they moved in across the street. And it was a couple and their 11 or 12 year old daughter, and her name was Katchi. And the day they were moving in, white people sat on their porches and

looked at them. Did they go over and welcome them? Did they bake cookies? Did they bring a basket? No. They sat on their porches and looked at them like they were watching a UFO landing on their lawn, and we were so disgusted, we were so completely sickened and disgusted by it that we made this show of force, and Karen and myself and I think your mom and my friend Nancy went over to Katchi's house and introduced ourselves and welcomed her to the neighborhood, and we then started hanging around with Katchi. And Katchi was a wild little thing, goddamn it if she didn't have a pet monkey. It was unbelievable.

She concludes:

We'd never seen anything like this before. And in retrospect, because this was part of the blockbuster program, I'm really scared about what that was about. But here we were, reaching out and being the welcoming neighbors, and we were all of about 11 or 12 years old. And we befriended Katchi and she would hang out with us, because we were always out. So, lest I get too crabby about all of this, we were always out. And damnit if Nancy, who dressed real nice, whose mother took care of her, and she would wear, like, peter pan collars and pink shirts, and if that monkey didn't shit on her the first time she....and that wasn't a pretty picture for Nancy. Nancy sells Mary Kay cosmetics, so Nancy still has that in her. It wasn't a pretty picture. But I couldn't make this up, I mean, you couldn't write this stuff. Katchi was hard – she wasn't somebody I would've chosen. She was sort of a wild, undisciplined kid. But she was what she was, and we got to know her and we wanted to reach out to her, and we were mortified at the way the adults acted, I mean, we thought it was unbelievable. I remember Karen's grandmother Mrs. Dean sitting out on her porch staring, I remember that like it was yesterday. I can't imagine what that would've felt like for that family. Because, if someone's gonna sit – I mean, sit on your porch, but say hello. Sit on your porch, but wave, or say “welcome to the neighborhood,” or something. So, that was 1968.

The tone of this story reveals the ways in which my mother and aunt's generation of Jews are invested in their self-perceived racial liminality. It is crucial to the construction of modern Ashkenazi Jewish identity that the Jews in this era are remembered as still being at the cusp of the mythic (ethnic?) urban shtetl. In Trudy's stories, Katchi functions as a hinge for the construction of self identity.

Trudy differentiates reactions to the marked, visible different of Katchi's family on the basis of both generation (the parents vs. the children) and access to “ethnic” whiteness (Nancy vs. Trudy). In Trudy's memory, the neighborhood parents, confronted with integration, become monolithic – they represent racist white America, the destruction of authentic culture, the pull towards straightened identities. They are unflappable, entitled to simply sit on the porches of their

comfortable homes and stare. They are undeniably white. In this story Nancy, a Catholic kid with her future in Mary Kay Cosmetics and her precise clothing, has infiltrated the otherwise sequestered community of “authentic” neighborhood kids with this particular brand of entitled whiteness. The new black kids in the neighborhood are still articulated in the terms of the Other, still inscribed with racist stereotypes – they are “wild,” “undisciplined,” “rough,” “womanly,” “worldly.” This leaves Trudy – and, by proxy, my mom and other Jewish kids in the neighborhood – in an interesting position of (imagined or “actual”) *difference* that I posit is actually a crucial element of the modern manifestation of “progressive” Jewish identity.

My grandmother, mother and aunt have all, at some point, told me the story of Katchi's monkey. My grandmother recalls it as alarming - “they had a pet monkey!,” she says. My mother and aunt, however, both want to tell stories about the incongruity and foreignness of the monkey while noting their recognition of the symbolic significance of monkeys in the racist colonial imagination. It seems to me that their investment in naming Katchi's monkey as a plant - that is, in recognizing the power of the monkey as a racist specter and therefore attributing its presence to the undeniably racist blockbusting real estate agents – is, for Trudy and other Jews in the neighborhood, part of a larger project of shielding and removing their identities from the racist whiteness of their parents and, to a lesser extent, of Nancy. The ability to name racist stereotypes - “I know that associating monkeys with people of color is racist and therefore I know that it must not really be *their* monkey” and, further, “If I think racist things about Katchi and her monkey, it is because *other people have made me think them by giving her that monkey*” - is culturally cited as a mark of anti-racism. Here, it functions, I believe, to associate Trudy and the other Jews with an authentic ethnicity that is not white/not quite.

It is important, I believe, for Trudy – and, perhaps, other Jews – to remember the early period of integration with a degree of wary camaraderie – it is important to remember the street,

the neighborhood as a place of authentic (read: “ethnic”) culture so as to be able to point to *what was lost* in the move to the North Side, the move into undeniable whiteness.

Despite their participation, as has been noted before, in racist opposition to the Chicago Housing Authority Projects and to racially mixed communities even before the blockbusting program took hold on the South Side, I believe Ashkenazi Jews in the middle of the 20th century perceived themselves as, if not racialized, then at least marginalized on the basis of their embodied identity. I believe that there was some sense, at the time, at least in certain secular “progressive” Jewish households (like Oscar and Ruth’s) of a sort of inherent solidarity with people of color due to shared stories of marginality under systems of racialized domination. Trudy’s statements about Katchi and Yvonne, I believe, are part of this sense of self. This story, however, becomes more complex when the seeds of an ethnic Jewish pride in statements like “we were not early birds on the white flight,” are put in conversation with the end of Trudy’s story about blockbusting: “It scared the fragile white people... I felt panic. There was this panic in the air.” She continues, “It was primarily a Jewish panic, because the Jews were the first to go.”

The actual response of South Side Jews to blockbusting was varied. According to the documentary “Blacks and Jews,” the Jewish community was “deeply divided over his support for black homeowners.” Rabbi Robert Marx - civil rights activist, president of the Inter-Religious Council on Urban Affairs, founder of the Chicago Conference on Religion and Race, and the Jewish chairman of Chicago’s Black-Jewish Dialogue – notes in a taped interview that working in solidarity with black homeowners on the West Side and South Side was seen as “breaking ranks” from the Jews. “To confront racism, black and white civil rights activists would have to face divisions within their own communities,” he says.

Indeed, many of the Jews working in coalition with new homeowners have been forgotten or intentionally expunged from historical memory. As my mother and Trudy recall,

these coalitions and initiatives were simply shut down.

Trudy says,

There was a program called Community Pride, and I wanted so much for it to work. It was people hanging on, people taking pride in their neighborhood, people getting to know their new neighbors, people sticking around and building it instead of letting it get torn down, people not being scared. But it didn't work. Because the realtors already had it made. They had used their psychology – in a very embarrassing way – to create such a panic about, ostensibly, property values, but way more than property values.

She continues

We were angry about it, and we were shouting all our platitudes and bromides, but we were being told “you'll understand when you're older, you'll understand when you're older.” “This is about being scared, being prejudiced!” “no it's not.” and it was about money. But all these things tie in.

My mom remembers the community-based organizations as oriented towards a sort of racial purity, articulated a politic of “the South Side is for white people.” She says,

There was a lot of generalized anxiety, people scared that they would lose their neighborhood, lose their friends. And I was very very very – Trudy and I and Karen were very absolutely bereft by this. This became our focus during the second half of high school, was how to save the neighborhood. We were trying to figure out a way to save it...we saw it as, you know, people should be racially mixed, but not everyone should move away. But really, we were trying to keep it white. I mean, that's what everybody was doing.

And so, a multitude of differently inflected stories about race and Jewish identity emerge simultaneously through the recollections of my mother and Trudy. Jews, it seems, were more likely than their Catholic neighbors to identify with African American families, due to a somewhat shared history of oppression, of “aloneness.” In some ways, I believe that when Jews encountered black folks in their neighborhood, they were confronted simultaneously with the their whiteness *in relief*, and with their own fear of the tenuousness of that whiteness. As a result, according to Trudy, they were the first to flee. “Jews went first,” she says, “they ran for their lives.” In moving to the North Side – staying “among the Jews,” as my grandmother says, but in what Trudy and my mother saw as a wealthier neighborhood with “bigger schools” and “less

community” - they both confirmed their whiteness and experienced a deep sense of mourning and loss for the partially “real,” partially “imaginary” community of shared marginality and relative homogeneity that they had experienced in the entirely “ethnic” white version of the South Side.

My family, I believe, was coming to understand itself within this muddled and contradictory time. Eventually, the fear became too much for them. “My parents bought their house in 1954 for \$18,000,” Trudy says, “and they sold their house in 1969 for \$18,000. It was devastating to people who had worked so hard to not relive the depression, and to give their kids a better chance to get no return on their house.”

What eventually caused them to move is somewhat unclear. They all talk of mounting violence, shootings at the high school, and fear of the Blackstone Rangers, a partially-Islamic black civil rights group and street gang formed in 1958 in opposition to Chicago's white power gangs. Ruth talks of Oscar's phone calls – his constant anxiety over the changes in the area, his charge that they “move North.” But I posit that it was the loss of Martin Luther King Jr., which my aunt notes as “completely devastating,” and, more significantly to their decision making process, the subsequent “race riots” on the South Side and the West Side, which constituted the decisive moment. These “riots” were something that my family was *subject to* rather than having *participated in*; this, I believe, speaks to their already-consolidated whiteness.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s mythic presence figures into stories told by Trudy and my mother. Trudy says, “In our day there is just absolutely no doubt in my mind – and I have his posters all over the place – that the leader of the black community was Martin Luther King. And he was an incredible man. He was an incredible man.” Clearly, his influence was felt in their lives. From their stories, however, I learned little of his actual impact on their version of Chicago's South Side.

Martin Luther King Jr came to Chicago in 1965 as part of an attempt to extend his particular arm of the civil rights movement into the north. He had considered five cities – Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, DC and New York – but had settled on Chicago due to, amongst other factors, the “enthusiastic welcome” he had received there and the profound issues surrounding racist violence and access to housing. The choice of Chicago was announced on September 1st, 1965.

At the time, two-thirds of Chicago's black population lived in the southern part of the South Side 'ghetto,' and nearly all the rest lived in the West. In early 1966, Martin Luther King Jr. moved to North Lawndale, a neighborhood that had seen quite profound racial cleansing disguised as neighborhood revitalization. MLK took over trusteeship of the building to fix it up for other families.

A riot on Division Street occurred on June 12th, 1966 - one day after the first Puerto Rican Day parade. The cops were called to “break up a fight” among teenagers in Humboldt Park – they shot one of the kids, claiming to have been threatened by an alleged gun, and it sparked a 1,000 person protest. One policeman and two civilians suffered gunshot wounds, and 13 people were injured. The cops called in police dogs. No one was killed, but 49 people were arrested and appeared before court the next day. That night, there was a demonstration that involved heavy property destruction.

One month later, in July of 1966, Martin Luther King Jr. held a rally. 40,000 people attended, and, later, 30,000 marched to city hall to demand public housing, marching through white neighborhoods – in August, he met with Mayor Daley, with no result (Abu-Lughod 2007).

Janet Abu-Lughod writes,

No scholarly reconstructions exist of the riot in April 1968 that destroyed an enormous swath of territory in the Second Ghetto on the West Side after King's assassination. While

reactions of despair and anger triggered demonstrations in virtually all areas of Chicago where blacks lived, only in the West Side Second Ghetto did events spin out of control in arson and looting, leaving some 20 square blocks along West Madison Street and Roosevelt Road in rubble. At the risk of sounding paranoid, I am tempted to suggest that, because this area stood in the path of white 'desire,' this consequence may have been intended. (2007, 93)

On April 4th, 1968, MLK was murdered. Abu-Lughod continues

It was scarcely unexpected that one of the most violent would be manifested in Chicago, given its large black community and the uneasy race relations that were endemic to the city. The only puzzling anomaly was that rioting on the South Side, which contained by far the largest proportion of African Americans in the city, was relatively sporadic and quickly suppressed, whereas the much smaller Second Ghetto of the West Side went up in flames. (ibid)

The scholarship that exists on this is limited – Janet Abu-Lughod draws her account from “the emotional, almost hysterical, day-by-day newspaper accounts and the day-by-day bland summaries of official actions, chronicled later in the Mayor's Riot Study Committee reports” (2007, 95).

Perhaps it's not crucial for me to detail the events of the days between the 4th and 10th of April. Suffice to say that newspaper accounts and testimonies vary, in their estimation of the extent and chronology of property destruction. In housing complexes and at high schools, there were arson attempts and property destruction. An article from the *Chicago Daily News* indicated that violence on the South side was “as bad as, if not worse than, that on the West Side” (ibid). Eight South Side high schools were closed and more than 400 students broke the windows of 100 stores, or so they say.

“Despite this,” Abu-Lughod writes, “attention focused almost exclusively on the West Side – in large measure because expansion of the riot from there could possibly threaten nearby white businesses in the Loop, whereas on the enormous South Side it could be contained. It was during the afternoon of April 5th that, as Abu-Lughod writes, “the mass media began to construct its image of 'rioting for fun and profit.' The *Chicago Daily News* of April 6th reveled in its description of 'bedlam.' The Mayor's Riot Study Committee report narrative begins with 'looting’”

(2007, 97)

Certainly, there were fires – and newspaper headlines designed to incite further panic and terror. Abu-Lughod cites the *Chicago's American* headlines from Saturday, April 6th as “A night of hell for Chicago Firemen,” “Police Outnumbered, West Side looters run wild,” and “Newsmen Flee Mobs, Tell of W.Side Terror.” She writes, “Why 4,000 firemen found the fires 'too much' remained unexplained. Firefighters claimed they were under attack by snipers. However, the picture just above McHugh's critical article in the *Chicago Daily News* shows a national guardsman threatening bewildered passersby with his bayonet rather than any threats from a mob or even snipers” (2007, 98).

On April 6th, Mayor Daley called for the mobilization of federal troops, whereupon President Johnson immediately signed the executive order for the Illinois Army National guard. Five thousand army troops, already mobilized from a nearby camp, were joined by 6,900 national guards. On the night of April 6th, Mayor Daley instituted a 7pm curfew on all residents of the city under the age of 21.

On April 8th, schools that had been closed down were reopened, and on April 9th, all the Chicago public schools were closed down in memory of MLK. On Wednesday, April 10th Mayor Daley declared the official emergency terminated, lifted the curfew and began the demobilization of the troops.

It later became known to the public that the superintendent of the police, James Conlisk, had been under direct orders by Mayor Daley to “shoot to kill arsonists and maim and detain looters” from the beginning of the riots. Daley is quoted as saying “I have conferred with the superintendent of police this morning and I gave him the following instructions which I thought were instructions on the night of the 5th that were not carried out. I said to him very emphatically and very definitely that an order be issued by him immediately and under his signature to shoot to

kill any arsonist or anyone with a Molotov cocktail in his hand and to maim or cripple anyone looting in stores” (Quoted from a Chicago Daley News article from 1968, in Abu-Lughod 2007 101).

Of all of this, what my family remembers is sketchy, a testament, simultaneously, to their non-participation in the rioting, the age of my mom and Trudy and their general fear and anxiety living in a single parent household at the time. My mother remembers “a lot of unrest,” Trudy remembers “a riot.” Ruth recalls “riots all over the south side.” “All the telephones were shut off,” she says, “because the blacks were coming in with guns.”

With Oscar still in the hospital, Ruth, Trudy, Larry and my mother moved to the North Side, where, as Ruth puts it, “there would be people similar to me.” They got a place, she says, with “three small bedrooms, in an area in which I wanted to be in, near the JCC.” What they lost in the move, according to my mother, was the kind of community that supported difference, that fostered communication and mutual support. She articulates the move as “the undoing of Larry.”

According to my mother, Larry went from being a person with context – the Treiman kid – on the South Side to being “just a weird kid” on the North Side. In some ways, I believe this is an articulation of both the reality and the mythic narrative of the loss of marginalized identity, the shift into whiteness. This change in acceptability, legibility and identity that my mother perceives as, perhaps, essential to the assimilation into whiteness has had deep implications – as a functional process and a narrative – on my life, my whiteness, my madness.

**(OVER)-EXTENDED:
LAYING/LIVING WITH THE
ENEMY**

Chapter Six: All My Ghosts

Seconds

I remember my grandfathers death with the exaggerated precision of an outright lie. *Maybe nothing I say can be trusted.* I was six years old. Andrew was three. We were sitting at the white plastic table, the one with uncertain green legs, adrift on the gnarled blue living room carpet. Sometime ocean, sometime sky, that staggering expanse was catalyst for fantasies of escape and isolation unique, I surely thought, to urban childhood. That night, though, the carpet was just a carpet, the table was just a table. We were eating chocolate ice cream in reverent silence.

Looking back on how I thought of Andrew at the time, I can hardly believe the taste of my own memory. In the (many) intervening years since the blue carpet days, he has become my ally, my teacher, my most trusted friend and a damn good rock and roll drummer. At the time, though, he was simply the size, shape and weight of “younger brother” – inexplicably tying his Grover stuffed animal in successively smaller knots, dancing with flailing-armed abandon, possibly reading my thoughts and sharing my dreams for which I both respected and resented him. He was biting my forearm and stealing my thunder in the most aggravatingly endearing way. Surely, this is what I thought.

Before I was who I am we used to play this “game.” It was an ice cream race; who, oh who, will finish first? He “won” every time, by which I mean, I won in secret. I was always eating the things I liked far too fast, and then coveting Andrew's unfinished portion. *Why does he always have more ice cream than me?* If I finished last, I couldn't be jealous. I'd watch him gobble up his ice cream deliriously quick, and then savor my secret spoils in smug silence.

I remember my mother through the cut-out wall separating the angular kitchen from the rest of the main floor, peephole to frustrating paradoxes of childhood. I wanted so badly to climb

through it; scramble up onto the kitchen counter and make a dive for the living room couch, breaching the border and defying the laws of gravity, common sense and separate rooms. That, though, was the kind of thing you couldn't do until you were an adult. Only grownups, with their unmistakable ability to assert autonomy over their bodies, actions and environments, could climb kitchen counters and jump through walls. However, unless my mom and dad were scrambling through these inviting architectural fissures in space-time while I was sleeping or out, I felt fairly certain that was something that adults *simply didn't do*. When I read Catch-22 in High School, it made a kind of ancient sense.

Sometimes, loss must travel great distances – sometimes through many time zones - to reach us. Somehow, it always shows up too soon. It was already late when my mom got the phone call. She picked up the phone, listened for a moment, and then let out scream so rubbery and anguished that the memory of it has been bouncing off every available surface since. The whole house gasped – kitchen cabinets ajar, wobbly legs on the plastic table briefly, rigidly righted. “Grandpa is dying,” she said. Or maybe “Grandpa is dead.” I can't believe I can't remember.

Everything skipped a beat and then went right on ticking. Such is life, I guess. “That's terrible,” I responded, with six-year-old precision. I gestured gently towards the ice cream. “In honor of this sad event, can we have seconds?”

Now, I find that memory is trapped in the aperture of adulthood, blocking the light, preventing the shutter from opening fully. I was so young to be manipulating tragedy to benefit my interests. *How could I have responded that way?*

Some seventeen years later, the news of Larry's death traveled the same distance of phone wires and time zones. It spoke in the same voice. I was asleep in Andrew's old bedroom when the telephone rang. Trudy, surely, was trying to maintain *just maintain* some semblance of calm, of

sense, for everyone. I woke up to a scream I had forgotten that I had forgotten and suddenly remembered, and then remembered remembering. Before I knew it, we were driving to Andrew's house in Binghamton, plucking him out of his junior year of college and depositing him – and ourselves - in Chicago, leaving my friends in the care of the multiply refinanced house on the outskirts of the Bronx with the scuttling-about of framed photographs, abandoned home appliances and the general heft of the grown.

A few months later, I was sitting on Sheryl Nestel's living room class. She was teaching a class - "Jews, Identity, and Difference" in the Sociology and Equity Studies in Education department at my graduate school that I was defiantly sure, before attending, wasn't really going to be relevant to my life. *Certainly I've sorted through the ghosts of my own Jewishness. Why belabor the point?* It ended up being a strange kind of rigorous group therapy – for me, anyway. I couldn't figure out what to write that would do justice to the growing and thinking I had done. "I want to write something about my uncle," I said to her, "but I don't know what to write."

Sheryl has since become my thesis adviser, sometime-confidant and go-to-theorist. Jewish identity, well, it has become an integral site of inquiry, the entryway to my thoughts about privilege and identity. "Something about my uncle" has become this project. And I can't help but think I have somehow been manipulating tragedy to benefit my interests.

I had intended, initially, to write about my uncle. I never knew Larry enough in his life; I wanted to know him better, in his death. I wanted, in fact, to re-write the script of my post-mortem desire for contact – in (re)figuring history, I hoped to retroactively write myself into *having wanted to know him better all along*. I wanted to chalk our lack of contact up to social stigma, psychiatry and geographical distance, and not to the specifics of Larry and I. I wanted to avenge his death through the practice of thorough history – to write scathing indictments of the very apparatus of ableist domination, to hold the individuals and structures that made his life so

difficult accountable. I wanted to make lemonade out of tragedy – bitter victory, sure, but victory nonetheless. I think, in some ways, I wanted to take up my mother's call - “you are Larry's legacy.”

What they call “life,” along with a healthy dose of solipsism, got in the way. Turns out, this project is about me. I fear that the the desire to “set right,” to “avenge” - processes that I find deeply suspect (or, better put, largely impossible) on most days – was always a thinly masked project of making myself. In wanting to avenge his death, what I really wanted was to make myself the avenger. I worry that, in Larry's death, I was looking for an opportunity to make myself the kind of person who can set things right. Or, at least, the kind of person who tries. I fear that, in eventually reconstituting my own version of Larry's life, without his consent or knowledge, and in using that reconstituted version to speak deeply to and about my own self-making, I am doing great damage to his memory, to my family, and to myself. I fear that in articulating Larry as somehow socially inexplicable (mad), and critiquing my own explicability in relation to his marginalization, I am merely furthering the project of my own privileged explicability at the cost of his. *“In honor of this sad event, can we have seconds?”*

Just after Larry's death, I started to think about the ways in which he and I were called together into a history of *making mad bodies* or *making bodies mad*. I was angry about what happened to him and I wanted to do something about it. I began to think about the social power of adopting, outright, the “crazy” identity, as it somehow called me into closer conversation with him, forced an acknowledgement of the similarities between us, even though he took great pains to conceal and fight it in his life. I began to identify, in select (and mostly so-called “activist” sites) as “disabled.” This was a project with a politic – bolstering the ranks of the disability rights movement, re-defining disability as a set of sometimes-invisible complex social practices that separated bodies from idealized (and fictive) normativity. But it was also about belonging –

belonging to a marginalized group, belonging to a history of struggle, belonging to Larry.

I *pass* – I get to choose when and where I identify as mad (and, relatedly, as queer and as Jewish). I told myself that identifying as “crazy,” as “disabled” was an intentional intervention on my own passing. I told myself that, in making it harder for me to pass, I was *doing good work*. But I still maintained control over when and where I “came out,” for the most part. Except in the doctor's office or the courtroom, I elected to identify only in spaces where it was acceptable, where I might gain acceptance. I am concerned that I have used Larry to get to me; further, that I have used Larry to get to a part of me that is always inauthentic. Then, I wonder where I got this notion of authenticity from, and I boomerang back to Jewish identity.

We are all always bigger than ourselves. Only the ethical convictions borne of great naivety would allow me to believe that I could somehow *write Larry* without writing myself. Further, still, it was ludicrous to believe I could *write myself* without writing all the Treimans.

I am concerned that in looking for my own history in the stories of others, I have given up my own agency. How immature; I am not taking responsibility for myself. It is much more difficult than I had expected to figure accountability, agency and history at once. I carry my great-aunt's insecurities, my Nanny's aversion to gummy candies. I hear my dad's voice sometimes when I speak, my politics are an impossible mix of Andrew's and “my own.” Which of these things is mine? For what am I responsible? Is the game fixed?

I began this project by suggesting “haunting” as a framework for figuring accountability. In attempting to make myself more haunted, though, I have come up with a new set of questions: to whom are we accountable, at any given time? How can we be accountable to ourselves without being accountable to our histories? How many ghosts should a person keep around? How do you ever develop a relationship with ghosts that isn't merely a conversation in a hall of mirrors? Is

attempting to create a structure for accountability merely another way of wriggling out of blame? Are we blameless in the things that came before us? Why am I so invested in figuring out how to take responsibility, what to take responsibility for? Is this merely the “privilege guilt” I’ve been told to be so wary of? Am I looking for an enemy so that I don’t have to be one? Am I the enemy? Does “enemy” even make sense?

Amidst all this is a genuine desire to become accountable to the ways in which my privilege hurts others, to become accountable to the people I inadvertently hurt by benefiting from my privilege. Amidst all this is the desire to become a threat to power – hell, there are times when I still harbor the desire to be “revolutionary,” to support people in their revolutionary struggles. Sometimes, I worry that articulating these questions and their history in and through an exploration of my own identity – *becoming explicable* – functions to make me less of a threat to normativity I seek to unpack and, thereby, challenge. I worry that this project of rendering my family, and myself, explicable takes away the potentially disruptive power of our mad illegibility. I worry that I am doing what I have been told to do, all the while thinking that I’m doing something new.

I have always been encourage to write, to speak. I grew up thinking I had authored the world. If you had asked me, when I was young, why I was so sad, I might’ve explained to you that sometimes things were hard because I was afraid that everyone was already dead, and I was just remembering their presence around me. I was the only thing left, maybe the only thing there ever was. As a result, I would’ve warned you that I might be dangerous, but I wouldn’t be entirely sure why. I’m sure I would’ve told you that I was terribly lonely, though I’m not sure I knew what that meant. At some point – when I was six or seven – these kinds of comments, and their attendant sleepless nights and propensity towards tears and rages caused all orders of teachers and professionals to fret over me. *Maybe I’m crazy.*

If you ask me now – and sometimes, I regard simply being in the presence of others as a tacit request for that process of listening and speaking we call “making a story” – I’ll tell you that all of these feelings of fright and expansiveness, all of the fears of “being crazy,” were reactions conditioned by the matrix of specific socio-political and personal/historical circumstances that interpellated my subjectivity. Somehow, it seems, extensive standardized testing, female socialized genderqueer sensibilities, New York City class anxiety and the super-hero/super-villain self-mythologizing that manifests uniquely in white Ashkenazi culture-producing urban Jews manifested in a compulsion towards self-examination, a constant storying. I also might tell you now that my fears are all genealogical; I have my mother’s dreams of inadequacy, the profound fear of some sort of metaphysical abandonment that my aunt says brought her to religion. If the content changes, and the structure stays the same, then who owns the story? Are these things any less *mine* for being products of my environment?

My compulsion to narrate myself is historical. My compulsion to narrate the compulsion to narrate is also historical. The ascription of my so-called “compulsions” (I am most at home in the re-appropriated language of pathology; I believe I somehow deserve it, and can make liberal and un-interrogated use of it so long as I always make use of an identity politic I fear might, itself, be worth scrutiny - “I’m crazy”) to historical processes is, I fear, an attempt to wriggle out of responsibility for them, a watermark of privilege and entitlement. That, too, has a history. And so, the snake that eats its own tail realized its head was exploding.

The political product embedded in this narration, and narration of narration, is a complicated one. It is, perhaps, quite suspect. I know what I intend; my search to better narrate myself is an attempt to situate privilege. In the past, I’ve even framed it as a sort of discursive intervention on neo-liberal capitalist colonial post-enlightenment Christian white ableist heteropatriarchal homo/transphobic classist (etc) notions of the ideal private autonomous citizen-

subject. *But I'm not him. I'm all of this "me." Look here, I'm spilling out all over! Aren't you?*

How can you tell the difference between rhetoric and action? How can you tell when you're trying to do something and when you're actually doing it? In claiming to become accountable to my history by narrating my identity, am I making empty promises? Deflecting responsibility? Making amends? Becoming accountable?

The promise of this project was to explain myself through the lens of Larry's life and the stories my family tells about race and madness. The promise of this project was to make accountability (to my family, my friends, my world) possible. As a white person who can mention or neglect Jewish identity at will, and a mad person who passes for sane (even to myself, sometimes), I feel an obligation to make good on my promise. But there's always more at play. I am about my family. I am about myself. I am also about my schools.

Everything I needed to know, I learned in my expensive, social-justice-minded, multicultural, Jewish Manhattan kindergarten. That is to say myself as historical – and, further, the proposed political project that emerges from that sense – manifest in my life as a project of a certain kind of curriculum. I am *schooled*. Of course, I've had control – choice – almost every step of the way. At least I think I have. But the compulsion to self-narrate (mine), my technology of self-narration (“academic” language) and my anticipation of the particular audience (you) are manifestations of and responses to the curriculum of identity-formation and re-formation transmitted through, in and by select institutional or semi-institutional sites of “learning.”

I have always endeavored to make myself explicable – or incomprehensible – *in relief* to the schools I have attended. I have always understood myself through a narrative of *defiance of academic standards* and *ease of intellectual learning*. I've known myself as “book smart” because that's what they told me; I've known myself as “book smart” because it was a mode of survival. I

wonder, though, just when and where survival becomes willing assimilation.

Through my grandmothers constant reiteration of his degrees and accomplishments, Larry is remembered through the scrim of academic achievement. However, somewhere deep and hidden in that memory lies is the specter of the Orthogenic School and Bruno Bettelheim's rehabilitative project. In some ways, despite his two Masters degrees, Larry "failed" to become the proper "smart (Jew)"; he dropped out of his PhD program, he couldn't get a teaching job, he never became the straightened white masculine reproductive Zionist. Me, though, I "succeeded" - here I am, writing a rambling, self-indulgent Masters thesis about my emergence from a straightened white identity while inhabiting that very straightened white identity. My sensitivities, ethics, and eccentricities are more socially palatable than Larry's. Larry was a Jew; I'm white (and, oh yeah, Jewish). Larry went to the Orthogenic School; I went to Ethical Culture. Larry grew up in the 1960s; I grew up in the 1990s. Larry was a scientist; I write about writing about writing. Larry was expected to be a "man"; I was expected to be a "woman." And somehow, I emerged from all the things that happened to him.

Five years ago, after what I used to think of as my "incredible triumph over anorexia and self harm," just as I was coming off of the anti-depressant Lexapro and had begun drinking and using drugs almost solely for pleasure (rather than out of necessity or fear), I became obsessed with the thought that zombie movies held the key to North American anxieties about imperialist domination and capitalist alienation. I was also sure zombie films held some sort of key narratives about race and colonialism. Over the course of many consecutive sleepless nights, I consumed vast amounts of information about the conception, reception and content of all the zombie films made since Victor Halperin's 1932 silent "White Zombie." I interviewed scores of members of the "zombie survivalist movement," watched and critiqued films, read and critiqued critiques of films, and brushed up on zombie mythology.

At some point during this feverish week, I removed the door from my closet and created an enormous time-line, mapping zombie film releases and box office revenue with major events in popular North American consciousness. I color-coded it, creating a complex legend decipherable only to me. I drew stars, scratched underlines and dotted the whole thing with exclamation points. Then, I turned in a paper. I was taking an undergraduate anthropology class. I got an A.

It's not that I hadn't thought about historical conceits of madness and stability before. I had already been to scores of therapists, beginning in my insomniac childhood and reaching a zenith in the forced visits to nutritionists and psychologists under threat of hospitalization in high school. I had been on – and off – of psychiatric medication, had been self-medicating for years. I had already developed a cordial relationship to the visions of long-fingered faceless men who seemed to always take up residency in the closets of my many bedrooms, learned when to talk about things as “dreams,” “fears” or “sleep hallucinations” and when to give people the full force of my genuine belief. I had considered suicide, as a theoretical position and as a distant possibility, and argued with many an NYU-grad student therapist assigned to *be on my case* about the multiple choice test handed out to every potential counseling client, with questions like “how often, on a scale of one to ten, do you consider jumping off of high buildings?” But I remember being struck particularly struck, at the time, with where my own current academia-sanctioned behavior fit into the social contract.

I was considering the stereotypical portrayal of “schizophrenics” in popular film – a few of these “sociopath” or “psychopath” characters made cameos in zombie films, many more are featured prominently in the horror-and-murder films that occupy the same shelf space as “Night of the Living Dead” or “28 Days Later” in most popular video stores. More often than not, when Our Hero breaks into the lair of a known- “schizophrenic,” they are confronted with a great mass

of associative thought, made manifest by the many newspaper clippings pasted to the archetypal basement or garage walls, with circles drawn around “key” elements, and wild-looking lines drawn between images and text, all in garish, gory red sharpie. The movie “schizophrenic” is seeing deep and profound connection between seemingly disparate things – government policy, say, and the food at their local grocery store; our protagonists banal or pedestrian role with the CIA and the murder of scores of families in colonized nations – and this “paranoia” renders them incomprehensible, illegible, terrifying and dangerous. Their very assumed out-of-sync-ness with the-world-as-we-imagine-it-to-be makes them profoundly Other, in that glossy-with-sweat Hollywood way. I remember looking around at the debris on my bedroom floor – the felled closet door with its many markings, the four hundred pages of Internet printouts, the elaborate celebratory notes written in my own private language and thinking that it was only a few crucial elements – my white middle-class identity, the windows in my bedroom in a shared college-student house, the fact that I turned in a paper on my findings and got a good grade – that separated me from that archetype of incomprehensibility.

I was – I am – a few degrees away from being cast out of normativity. It is the history of those degrees – no pun intended – in my life, as it emerges from the green and growing rubble of those who came before me, that I am interested in. And I have Larry to thank for that. I also have Larry to make my apology to. Maybe in making this autobiography *make theory* – whether or not it can somehow *make me accountable* – I can find the first words of what will be a lifelong gratitude, and a lifelong debt.

My Story/Their Story

I dare you to find the place for free will in all of this. I dare you to see any of this as anything but my own damn story.

My father is notably absent from memories of my childhood. Though my parents didn't split until I was 12 – giving me ample time to stick all order of early emotions to my Dad's gentle frame – I have pushed him to the corners of my consciousness. He remains the affable man carrying at least two pieces of communicative technology at any given time (cellphone, pager, videocamera), obscured by dust and shadow. He was the size, shape and weight of “father.” My mother, however, was too big and conflicted to be “mom.” My childhood was steeped in her, not as a care-giver or parent in the way I remember my dad, but as a *person*, and a person with conflicting desires. She wanted me to be her best friend; she wanted to be my teacher – I wanted to know who she was. I came to know myself in relation to all of the things she wanted me to be.

First and foremost, my mother wanted me to be smart. For her, being smart meant speaking well. Both my parents spoke the “standard” (white, northeastern, university educated) English of broadcast television. In the 1980s, my father worked for CBS. My mother, at Entertainment tonight, or ET. Later, my dad moved to NBC, was loaned to MSNBC, then was returned to NBC, plus interest. He is now the executive producer of NBC Nightly News. My mother, she ricocheted off of Good House Keeping Television straight into ABC, which became ABC-Disney. She eventually landed as the online editor for the women's website of a major international consulting firm. I learned the alphabet as used by television news, brought to me by acronyms. I can sing the sound-byte theme songs of any and all NYC-broadcast television (and radio) news programs that were on between 1984 and the middle of the 90s.

In How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America, Karen Brodtkin, a white Ashkenazi Jew from the United States, relays the story her parents tell of the “success of the Jews” as a narrative of pride. In her tale, Brodtkin notes that she grew up knowing her parents were “proud of their upward mobility and think of themselves as pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps” (26). Language and diction, Brodtkin notes, were a key means to this

“upward mobility.” As a result, she writes

My mother always urged me to speak well, like her friend Ruth Saronson, who was a speech teacher. Ruth remained my model for perfect diction until I went away to college. When I talked to her on one of my visits home, I heard the New York accent of my version of 'standard English,' compared to the Boston academic version. (1998, 33)

My parents, barely a generation away from poverty in urban Chicago, raised me to believe that to be Jewish was to speak well, and often; that Jewish identity came not from religious belief or diaspora “nationhood,” but, rather, a moral imperative towards education and language. When I was old enough to speak – I spoke before I could walk, before I could even fully sit upright – my mother began the ongoing profession of relief and praise that I “didn't have an accent.” In her early years in television, just after she and my father made the long-jump from Illinois to New York, she had worked hard to rid herself of the punctuated consonants and hard “A” sounds of the Midwest, developing a studied broadcast television English. My father, who moved often in his childhood, hopping from urban landscape to urban landscape with his NYC-born parents, never seemed conscious of his incongruous northeastern academic-speech, an aberration in a Midwestern dwelling family with its lingering Brooklyn-ese.

Though my parents were both the first in their immediate families to attend University, there was something profoundly schooled about their orientations towards the world, and towards the project of schooling. Brodtkin notes that her parents “believe that Jewish success, like their own, was due to hard work and a high value placed on education” (1998, 33). It is my mothers belief, as it is my aunt's and grandmother's, that Jews have a unique cultural purchase on “educated” identity.

As a very young child, my mother admitted to me that she didn't believe in God. She did, however, often note a strong allegiance to the notion of Jewish cultural affiliation. There was a sense that I was destined to be smarter than anyone I knew, because I was a Jew and because she

was going to see to it that it was so. Even at three or four, she spoke to me like an adult.

I had to audition for preschool. This, of course, was not uncommon. That is to say, 1980s white moneyed Manhattanites sent their children to private schools with waiting lists so long that people sometimes had to register their children before they were even conceived. We lived on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. It was a predominantly white rich Jewish culture-producing neighborhood bordered by Central Park, Riverside Drive, Harlem and midtown, which underwent massive gentrification/displacement of middle-to-low income queer folks during the 1980s as a result of the city and state project of forcibly impoverishing communities most affected by AIDS and has, in the subsequent period of so-called “urban renewal,” come to incorporate the areas of Morningside Heights that have been redeveloped by Columbia University. What I mean is: we were concerned with belonging.

I'm not sure whether I remember the audition – I find I mix it up with a story my friend Lee tells about his preschool interview, a group-play scenario observed through a two-way mirror. Another child was crying; Lee brought her a box of tissues, sat quietly with her until the sobs subsided, while his triumphant parents quietly celebrated, sure his empathic performance would win him a spot at whatever \$10,000/year institution they had him. My interview involved an IQ test, I'm certain; I remember it in a sort of magic realism patchwork of diffuse and early memory.

As far as I can tell, I took a test in the principals office of the Ethical Culture School on 63rd and Central Park West on an arcade video-game machine. It consisted mostly of matching games. I scored high enough that my mother began to tell me that I was a “genius,” something that made me shudder with anxiety. There were two phrases repeated throughout my childhood – things my brother and I spoke that were repeated back to us over and over again by our proud mother as proof of our sort of hilarious intellectual engagement with the world. One phrase – something my brother used to say when he was two or three and had noticed analogy rather than

equivalence between two objects, “they’re not the same, but they’re similar!” - incited applause and giggles, no doubt an elated response to his toddler usage of a three syllable word.

My exclamation *par excellence* now seems deeply troubling. In response to my mothers endless, uncomfortable praise, I would cry, “I’m not a genius! I’m just smart!” Somewhere there’s a videotape, my little face twisting in only partially feigned anguish. I remember the period alarmingly well – I was wracked with nightmares of mortality and violence, and walked around with a sinking fear that the praise being heaped upon me was disingenuous, adults biding their time, appeasing me until they could figure out what to do with someone so terribly inadequate, so terribly wrong. *I am the world’s most unfortunate super-hero; Captain I Don’t Know What’s Wrong With Me.*

I have, for awhile, had myself convinced that it is hard to believe you are anything but the author of the world when you are white, and young, you have access to money, you have a relatively stable family life and you live in a city that calls itself the center of the world. I had myself convinced that it is hard to believe you are anything but the author of the world when you are told there is no “right” way of speaking, with the tacit confirmation that every way you speak will be the “right way.” But I believe now that I made many choices, allowances, along the way that confirmed the thought that I could speak things into, or out of, being.

The Ethical Culture School was founded on the notion that there can be one (white-bred) educational schema appropriate and desirable for *everybody’s* children. It went about proving it by trying to get *everybody’s* children to attend. *Everybody* who had \$10,000 a year to spend on their 6-year-olds education, that is.

The organizing logic of the Ethical Culture school emerged from a uniquely turn of the last century North American Jewish notion of broad-based “progressivism” that is rhetorically

“accepting and non-discriminatory” but tacitly promotes the notion that Jews are inherently *more accepting and non-discriminatory than other white people* and therefore quietly exalts and exceptionalized Jewish identity. It is the sense that, as my Grandmother puts it, to be a Jew is to be “A real person. Doing things, helping others. Concerned for others.”

The Ethical Culture School – a member of the Ivy Preparatory School League – opened in 1878 as a free kindergarten, but has instituted exorbitant fees (according to their website, the 2009 tuition for pre-K to Grade 3 is \$34,045) in the intervening century-plus. Their official website claims the school is “committed to academic excellence, ethical learning, and progressive education” (Ethical Culture School n/d). The Ethical Culture school emerged from the Ethical Culture movement, founded by Felix Adler (1851 – 1933), a Jewish German immigrant who grew up and spent most of his life in New York a Jew, a “rationalist” and an “intellectual.” The school and the current incarnation of the “society,” which operates a large auditorium and meeting rooms in the adjacent building, are intended to function as havens for secular Jews who rejected the mysticism and rituals of Judaism, but accepted many of its ethical teachings. Additionally, because the institutionalized anti-Semitism of the times established rigid quota systems against Jews in private schools, the Ethical Culture School had a disproportionately large number of Jewish students. Ethical was the only one that did not discriminate because of race, color, or creed. (Singer 2009, 1)

The history of the “non-discrimination” and “ethics” that Jews purport to both require and practice in 20th/21st century North America is too sordid to fully explicate here. It is my contention that the notion of select purchase on “non-discrimination” as an “intellectual” Jewish attribute was key in assisting the Jewish scramble into whiteness. Karen Brodtkin notes that Jewish whiteness was effected through, among other things, federal programs designed to make university education and professionalization accessible to “Irish, Jews, and southern and eastern

European Catholics” who were all “held back until they were granted - willingly or unwillingly - the institutional privileges of socially sanctioned whiteness” (1998, 41). Jews were able to be “recognized and rewarded” as white due to “federal programs that were themselves designed to assist demobilized GIs and young families systematically discriminated against African Americans. Such programs reinforced white/nonwhite racial distinctions even as intrawhite racialization was falling out of fashion” (Brodin 1998, 50).

I believe that Jews carved out a unique role for themselves in the consolidation of white supremacy in North America through benefiting from these programs while simultaneously promoting the notion that they/we were unique among white people for their/our progressivism. If “non-discrimination” - as neo-liberal lip service and a tool of obfuscation - is understood as a progressive, educated and intellectual position and, simultaneously, a Jewish attribute, then Jews come to be associated with progressivism, education and intellectualism in a way that reinscribes colonial notions of white people who *know what's best*. This takes on an interesting character when some of this sense of moral entitlement/evolution emerges from a present memory of suffering – as my aunt would have it, being Jewish was all about “cultural morays” and “the fact that Jews had suffered.” We must recall – and take to heart – James Baldwin's famous argument that people in North American black communities are angry at Jews “not because he acts differently from other white men, but because he doesn't” (in Greenburg 2006, 47)⁶, and take this gesture towards the “non-discrimination” of Jews, at least in the present-day, with a historical literacy that begs us to be cautious.

It was certain, when I was young, that the curriculum of the Ethical Culture School was best for *everybody*. Though I do not recall a single teacher of color in my classrooms between

6 I choose not to [sic] Baldwin's “he”/“men” because I think the role that heteropatriarchy plays in the construction of Jewish whiteness is crucial, and though I do not have time or inclination, in this context, to fully explore the complex matrix of oppressions that create whiteness, I do want the gendered-sexist elements of the construction of white identity to openly haunt our reading.

pre-K and 3rd grade, I do remember the constructed multiculturalism of our classrooms, present in both curriculum and demographic make-up. There was a sense that *everybody's children* – that is, *every race and religion* (which I recall spoken in the same sentence, as if they were somehow equivalent in the social order) - were represented, though, as class trips to a ski resort called Frost Valley or to i-Max movies, not to mention the tuition, made clearly manifest, there was absolutely no attempt to hide the homogenous class-status (let's call it wealth) of the student body. In “The Silenced Dialogue,” Lisa Delpit explores how the white-bred “culture of power” is quietly but aggressively maintained through calls for linguistic non-interference. She examines the following statement:

Children have the right to their own language, their own culture. We must fight cultural hegemony and fight the system by insisting that children be allowed to express themselves in their own language style. It is not they, the children, who must change, but the schools. To push children to do anything else is repressive and reactionary (her emphasis) (1988, 291)

Delpit explains that this particular orientation towards education promotes a deepening structural inequity. By allowing kids to “express themselves in their own language style,” teachers/institutions deny children who do not have normative (read: native English speaking, educated, white) language cultures in their homes/home communities access to the tools to articulate themselves within sanctioned discourses of power. This maintains a normative (read: native English speaking, educated, white, moneyed, heteropatriarchal, property-owning, able-bodied) home environment/community as the site of select entry to legitimated linguistic communities.

At the Ethical Culture School, I did not learn to spell. They were afraid it would put a damper on my creativity and disturb my prolific writing. They taught me to talk and write in any way that I wanted, and trusted that I was learning how to speak right, speak white, speak power. Though my kindergarten teacher called home to tell my parents I was “emotionally disturbed”

(either in response to the incident of screaming-immobility on the stairs, when I just *couldn't* come into the classroom, or after I ran out crying and dry-heaving because someone had spit their chewing gum into the garbage in what seemed like slow motion, giving me a full ocular/auditory experience of chemicals softened by saliva), I was the darling of the classroom because I had *so much potential*.

As a kid, I wrote hundreds of stories. They were mostly morose descriptive pieces, set in hospitals on the eve of someones death or the apocalypse. Sometimes, they played out hypochondriac fantasies - I recall many stories in which I documented the symptoms of neurological conditions that I had invented. This is apparently a family tradition.

The classes we took on “ethics” at The Ethical Culture School echoed the (neo)-liberal “progressive” “understanding” of multiculturalism – read: an uninterrogated colonial ableism/racism/classism (etc). At home, I learned to carry granola bars in my backpack, in case a panhandler asked me for change - “it's better to give them food than money, because you don't know how they'll spend it” - while at school I learned that we should pay more attention to people who have become homeless, because it might just be that they have been evicted from their homes because of racist landlords or unfairly fired from their jobs because they were women. There was no analysis of entrenched, structural oppression and, certainly, no statement that under no circumstances should people lack access to housing, healthcare, employment/funds, self-determination, etc. Rather, the positions that I learned as “ethical” maintained the ableist, colonial, racist, gendered-sexist, homophobic (etc) notion of “deserving” (and, therefore, “undeserving”) people; they merely added, “you can't always tell who deserves what they get.”

I loved The Ethical Culture School. Why wouldn't I? – people listened to me and told me that I was smart. In my house – in my life – smart was the best thing you could be. The more I talked, the more people listened and told me I was smart; the more people listened and told me I

was smart, the more I talked. After we moved out of Manhattan to Westchester, NY, where I went to middle and high school, I remember sometimes singing the school anthem - "It's a feeling inside that fills us with pride/Growing together side by side" - to myself through hiccuped tears. This was my move from the South Side to the North Side; my displacement from a self-constructed "authentic" urban past into a whitened urban future. In middle school, I used to storm out of Mr. McKim's English class. I was angry – my parents had gotten divorced, I was anorexic and queer, my friends were attempting suicide or running away from home or coming out or having sex with older men from the Internet with me as their sole support, and Mr. McKim was telling us that there was only one correct way to read a poem. Years later, when I dated his daughter's ex, I was told that I had been a subject of hot debate in the McKim household, circa 1996. "Griffin, you're famous. Mr McKim used to talk about you at the dinner table. He said you were smart, but very difficult."

I had a Bat Mitzvah, and then quickly renounced Judaism. Everyone was pissed. In High School, I cut classes to hang out with the school bathroom with my crying friends, left in furious rages, called teachers "war hawks" and "homophobes," (they were) and still got an A. When I was fourteen years old, I had what I now call "my first panic attack." I was on the New York City Subway, thinking in words, about them. I had recently stopped being able to write in journals – an ability I have yet to regain – because the process of linguistic documentation had become too terrifyingly linear; all my internal language had begun to sound like an external address. I couldn't imagine the audience. It was a sort of oppressive awareness, like when you start to hyperventilate because you're paying too much attention to your breath. En/coding myself in English language had become a project of the ever-deferred "I"; *if I am only language, and language is touched, public, baggy, then where am I, anyway?*

I remember thinking about the word "table," and the matrix of interrelated concepts on

which my recognition of table-as-such depends. I remember doubting the veracity of the table-archetype in my head, even as I doubted the veracity of veracity. *Is what I imagine to be a table really a table? What do I mean by “really” a table?* It was foundational, and exhausting. New York City in the summer is always foundational and exhausting.

On that day, sometime in July, I was wearing a dangerous combination of spandex and cotton, having come from a required twice a week dance class and returning to the rigorous theatre conservatory in midtown where I spent my summers. I hadn't eaten all day. *I am the incredible shrinking body.* I had long-since vacated my insides – I am not mine. “Mine” was in storage, collecting dust and rusty nails in darkening corners, while I disappeared into a net of language games that boomerang wildly.

What I call “my first panic attack” could alternately be framed as “the time I first understood Derridean slippage” or “when I first *got* interpellation.” Then again, this could be internalized ableism, insisting that I distance myself from stigma and pathologization and deliver my identity back to the loving arms of savior smartness. Alternately, uttering “panic attack” and “Derridean slippage” in the same sentence could begin the work of unpacking the elitist mythologization of post-structuralist theory and help de-stabilize the bio-determinist fixity of mental health diagnoses. Then again, I could simply be trying to make myself feel better. In a process as tedious and self-consuming as the writing (and, I'd imagine, reading) of this paragraph, I recall arriving at a sort of ahistorical but theoretically complex meta-narrative of language, all at once. Then, I was on the floor of the subway car, breathing both too much and too little.

For awhile, nobody moved – not me, not the other passengers. Somehow, I made it off the subway. I remember only hitting the floor, a moment of “coming to,” and then being suddenly on the metro-north railroad, jetting home to Westchester, spun.

When I was in 10th grade, my 9th grade English teacher Mr. Marciano – a strange troll, indeed, with a penchant for badly performed accents and grandiosity, who had paid me \$75 to sing a Grateful Dead song at the altar at his autumnal wedding – handed me *Angels In America*, parts one and two. So began a lifetime of near-obsession with Tony Kushner. He was my first Jewish super-hero. I wouldn't realize until years upon years later that I was creating, in my love for him, a sensible model for radical queer Jewish identification; all I knew then was that I couldn't get enough. I ate his poems, swallowed play after play, and, for years at political demonstrations I carried a quotation from his 1998 essay “Matthew's Passion,” following the death of Matthew Shepard, scrawled in sharpie onto successively larger pieces of cardboard - “to remain silent is to endorse murder.”

I spoke constantly to conceal the grave silence beneath. I was righteous about so many things that I doubted were actually possible – self-knowledge, self-love, the overthrow of capitalism, queerness. I spent most of my life in a sort of mortal fear of *being found out*. What had, at a young age, been the fear that I was somehow *not smart enough* or, perhaps, *not even human* became, in adolescence, the fear simultaneously that I had no appropriate gender. I wasn't really a girl, that I was sure of. The other option, however, seemed to be that I was a gay man. Neither fit quite right, and it filled me with a sense of deceit, like I was betraying everyone.

My fear of *not being a girl* had the wet baloney smell of a High School cafeteria. It was a low-ceiling locker room fear (*I'm not supposed to be in here*), bloody and skinned. I made a life of fierce pursuit, seeking out the “indie rock boys,” terrified that my chest was too flat and my manner too aggressive and transparent to keep them satisfied. I bemoaned my late menstruation. All the while, I starved myself board-flat and narrow hipped, and was terrified by the breasts and hips that emerged overnight when I started eating chocolate and french fries. It felt like an alien landing, alienated me from everything formerly “mine.”

For a few years, I was a part time stuff-your-pants-and-strut-your-stuff drag king (in my first relationship, in my fantasies) and a twink on the weekends. I was an usher at Studio 54's production of Cabaret on Broadway, and I could be found hanging around at queer bars with the ensemble cast of Broadway musicals, trying desperately to pass, wanting to take all the old queens home. My friend Jeff would confide in me about making money on the side by doing porn – queer sex work seemed both incredibly taboo, totally exciting and *just right*. I imagined myself growing up to be glittery, embittered – a lonely performer with dreams of being a dad. When I thought of myself, it was always with a dick.

I had a deep and dangerous love for my best friend David, who was getting HIV tests and sleeping with men twice his age when we were just a few years into double digits. My friend Dex and I decided we were “gender fucked” in 8th grade. When she came out as a dyke two years later, I was still living the same double life. I felt cheated – *where the hell do I fit?*

I graduated high school when I was 16. I read the legal requirements of high school graduation in New York State and found that, due to forcible advancement in 8th grade to high school math and science and a sort of glib over-zealousness in elective language courses, I had completed all of the requirements to leave high school by the middle of my junior year, save four consecutive years of Phys Ed. I had one terse argument with my vice principal, whose office smelled of formaldehyde, and somehow convinced him to advocate on my behalf to the Powers that Be. *Do you really want me sticking around here for another year just to take gym twice a week? Think about it.*

I went to NYU Theatre School, watched Giuliani's New York go from passive to outright military state in the post-9/11 year, dropped out, applied to go to school in Ireland, and spent the summer of 2002 in the throes of an alarming depression living in a long-term-stay

hotel/apartment complex in Burbank, California where I was living in a downstairs unit with my brother, while my mother and her boyfriend lived upstairs.

In Los Angeles, I “discovered” Derrida. This “discovery” was concurrent to what I’d call my “politicization,” when I started reading about anarchism and racism. This gave me a sort of paradigm through which to interpret what had been an ongoing crisis of reality, and gave me a new kind of access to the process of reading, writing, storying myself. As Pinar writes, “Writing in the Derridean sense becomes a kind of architecture, that space and those movements of mediation which give and take form to formlessness. A kaleidoscope of impulses, instincts, memories and dreams are visualized, theorized, told as a story” (1988, 217).

Derrida in particular and post-structuralism in general opened up to me what bell hooks calls the possibility in theory for “a location of healing” (1994, 59). I remember looking back on finding Derrida as a decisive moment. For years, I explained California as a point-of-no-return. “I was so depressed, it was either Derrida or hospitalization.” I chose Derrida. I was able to make that choice.

Then, there were some crazy years. After California, things stagnated overseas – I moved to Ireland, drank and smoked myself stupefied, stayed in an abusive domestic partnership for nearly two years, and returned to a version of myself still struggling to make a political case for becoming explicable. Amazing, isn’t it, how I can brush over these crucial plot points – abuse, trauma, travel – because they are not part of this particular story?

When I came back to New York, I got really invested in school. I wouldn’t have told you that at the time – I would’ve said that I was planning to drop out, that I was only there for the activism and the good people. But, as I was accumulating what is now \$50,000 or so of debt allegedly “just for the activism,” I was quietly trying to solve myself through the language of

literature.

I wrote a swollen and drippy undergraduate thesis on the radical potentialities of language appropriation. I was trying desperately to work out/through my queer identity in a linguistic field, still fleeing the meat and bones and temporal finitude that constitute and govern who I am. Just like I did when I was fourteen, on the floor on the subway, I believe you could somehow access language *as a field*, or look at meaning-making from all angles at once to destabilize its very legitimacy, its very possibility. I talked and wrote endlessly, trying to *become* the ways I thought about the world. It was an attempt to enact what William Pinar writes of as the sort of “goal” of post-structuralist self-engagement – that

commodified subjectivity -the kind of psychological body society needs - would be unravelled. The self might become dazed, not focused - immersed in lived time not appointment minutes. it might experience itself as a body, as a being among physical objects, on the shore of Being (1988, 214).

What was alarming about my thesis and the larger project of self-involvement that it made manifest is what is also alarming in this quote: an investment in authenticity that claims that the only way to the authentic self is through the deconstruction of the notion of authenticity. This kind of thinking both denies and calcifies the boundaries of the body. It was appealing to me because I was trying to shore up the boundaries of body by fleeing it entirely, believing it to be impossibly porous and predominantly a discursive event. *If I can just find the best way of talking about myself, I will finally exist.*

I am trying to be understood. As I develop more and more precise ways of speaking about my implicatedness in processes of marginalization, I am becoming more and more legible. I fear, sometimes, that as I become more and more legible – more and more capable of speaking on processes of legitimation and domination through the legitimated language of domination – I become less and less of a threat. Or, rather, as I become more and more legible, I become more

and more aware of that very legibility through the process of attaining ever more legible and precise language.

Most of my life, I believed I was in contravention to the process of schooling. I yelled, I accused, I cut class, I dropped out. All that time, I was furthering the project of my own schooling, and reinforcing the logics of in/access and domination inherent to the system of schooling. It felt like the school (at large) and my schools (in particular) were constructing and using my identity to propel projects of identity formation, structural inequity, and the myth of “intelligence” forward – but maybe it was *just me*.

My very identity is schooled, and therefore any reaction I have to schooling will be within the paradigm of and legible to the project of schooling. How would I, a white person getting an MA from the upper west side of Manhattan (who is, sure, crazy and queer – but where and to whom?), become a threat? What does “threat” mean, in and on my body? How might I make “threat” relevant? Is that a coherent project? Is my investment in being “threatening” a way of distancing myself from being accountable to my privilege, like the Jewish whiteness-that-still-has-known-suffering-and-therefore-*cannot-be-at-fault*? I have always been a threat; it was, in part, my very threatening nature that made me so valuable to the schooling project. I was *a threat, but...*; “emotionally disturbed, but very smart,” “queer and crazy, but getting straight As,” “super aggressive, but so articulate.” Someone to be tamed. *Maybe I was always tame. Maybe it is inappropriate to think in these terms at all.*

As an adult whose life is less mediated/determined by my legibility in a school setting – I work, organize politically, perform and socialize outside of immediate context of the school – I find that I still, in the context of privilege, mediated by the notion of almost-threat. I’m the *not a threat, but*; “normative/dominant/privileged, but for that pesky queerness and madness,” which themselves are inseparable from/manifest as a function of the normative/dominant/privileged

identities that I occupy. Sometimes, I fear they are merely invented marginality – that is, until I step into the doctors office, the courtroom or the bedroom, at which point they become painfully, uncomfortably clear and mostly out of my control. William F. Pinar writes;

Once 'home,' is the issue resolved? The issue of authenticity may be, but the educational issue remains. What do I make of what I have been made? Put differently, what is it to be the relation of the knower to the known? What if who I have been conditioned to be is a homophobe, a racist, a misogynist? Experiencing this racism may lead to a psychological healing and self- acceptance momentarily, but even a partially conscious individual understands this posture is unacceptable. One must then work against this particular legacy, perhaps through logic, perhaps through prayer and other religious means, perhaps through study. THE point is this: as significant as self-knowledge and authenticity are, as important as it is now for teachers to exemplify as well as know these modes' psychological end-states, they set the stage for asking: what attitudes and actions are appropriate given this self-knowledge? (204).

I ask “what do I make of my constant attempt to ask what do I make of what have I been made.’ I ask “what if there is no home to go to but the act of the question?” I can hear my mother say, “how very Jewish.”

Chapter Seven: Conclusion or Bless Me Anyway

More Conditions, More Arrival

There is no self that is prior to the convergence or who maintains “integrity” prior to its entrance into a conflicted cultural field. There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very “taking up” is enabled by the tool lying there.

-Judith Butler, Gender Trouble

Summer arrived damply, or else not at all.

It's July, and cool. Verging on “cold.” Tonight, when I went out to walk the dog that lives in my house, I wore a sweater. He's not “mine,” you see - I am not his person, as they say (I often fear I'm not even a person; maybe I should never get a dog “of my own”) - but I walk him sometimes. His person, she's away, so tonight, it was just him and me. Him, me and the crashing silence of this project left unfinished. Him, me, and these shoulders unfit to carry the weight that I made. Him, me and a city that I'm not from.

Somewhere, the city that made me trucks along with the hum of industry and erasure. Sometimes I still talk to it, even from here. It knows me better than I know myself, I think – certainly better than I'll ever know it. Thing is, it doesn't care. It's a city. Concrete doesn't feel affection.

I like Toronto in two ways – on nights like this, when the very emptiness rising from the wet pavement in my neighborhood has a voice, a face. I like the false promise of *alone* that rings out from the very suburb-ness of these residential areas. It reminds me of being a teenager.

During the day, I like the density of Parkdale. I work there. Hundreds of people (or at least 50) know my name, or at least my face. For me it's the same – every face in Parkdale seems familiar, and I have an ever-expanding Rolodex of names. I work at an often crowded drop-in, PARC, where they call me “Community Mental Health Worker.” If someone meets my eye, if someone says hello first, I grin and chat. It's important to respect peoples' privacy, I figure – I don't want to out anyone as a PARC member on the street, and I don't want folks to feel

scrutinized or followed – but being recognizable fills me with a joy so thorough that it feels unsavory, inappropriate.

I've been thinking a lot about “becoming” and “being,” about “working” and “arriving.” I talk a big game about *constantly becoming*, about flux and fluidity, about scores never settled, but, when it comes right down to it, I'm as conditioned as anyone else, and I wince when someone asks me “what do you do?” I'd love to have an answer. “I'm a social worker,” I might say, or “I'm a community activist,” or, god forbid, “I'm an academic.” I like Parkdale, in many ways, because I fit into a role that I understand, and, while I feel conflicted about both its rigidity and its blurriness, that I consented to. Otherwise, most other times in my life, it seems, I am always becoming. I am never static.

I re-read the end of Gender Trouble. It changed my life years and years ago, but most people I know can say that. Judith Butler spends the conclusion talking about the practice of situating yourself – the desire, the responsibility, the attempt, the inevitable failure. I quote her at length because it's worth it. She writes,

The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed “etc.” at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete. This failure, however, is instructive: what political impetus is to be derived from the exasperated “etc.” that so often occurs at the end of such lines? This is a sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself. It is the *supplement*, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all. This illimitable *et cetera*, however, offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorizing.

If identity is asserted through a process of signification, if identity is always already signified, and yet continues to signify as it circulates within various interlocking discourses, then the question of agency is not to be answered through recourse to an “I” that preexists signification. In other words, the enabling conditions for an assertion of “I” are provided by the structure of signification, the rules that regulate the legitimate and illegitimate invocation of that pronoun, the practices that establish the terms of intelligibility by which that pronoun can circulate. Language is not an *exterior medium* or *instrument* into which I pour a self and form which I glean a reflection of that self. The Hegelian model of self-recognition that has been appropriated by Marx, Lukacs, and a variety of contemporary liberatory discourses presupposes a potential adequation between

the “I” that confronts its world, including its language, as an object, and the “I” that finds itself as an object in that world. But the subject/object dichotomy, which here belongs to the tradition of Western epistemology, conditions the very problematic of identity that it seeks to solve. (1990, 196)

In some ways, that's what I've been trying to say. Here we are, all living in the exasperated “etc.” Always attempting to make peace with a language that cannot contain us, but creates us – trapped in a state of im/possibility. But isn't it nice, sometimes, to feel grounded? Even if it is only for a moment, a breath between words; wouldn't it be amazing to able to say “right here, right now, this is what I *really am*”? What a relief it might be – what a relief it is – to sometimes, in the midst of all this negotiation, all this context, all this fluidity to say “I am a PARC worker,” and know that's true. Or “true.”

It is relieving, in part, because it is transparent – I do not feel like I am masquerading when I walk around Parkdale though, in many ways, I am. There are all manner of things that I intentionally or unknowingly obscure and outright hide as a PARC worker; I have all sorts of missing sides when I walk through Parkdale. But, for some reason, I have come to feel a certain, perhaps naive, confidence that the transparency – the recognition of all the extreme privilege and the minor elements of marginality that are insinuated into my identity when I am recognized as a PARC worker – means that I am occupying an identity that is *in plain sight*. I feel as if I am not doing the kind of terrible harm. This is unique because “PARC worker” is an identity of my choosing. With all other identities that I actively consent to – that I find “empowering,” even – I have the fear that I am doing immeasurable harm. When I identify as disabled or crazy, as queer or as Jewish I'm sure that I'm obscuring something, neglecting some history or present experience of privilege that should kick me out of the club.

I am invested in “accountability.” I am interested figuring out a way to say “I am ____” and, in *meaning it*, to live conscious of both those who “occupy” that identity and those against whom that identity is constructed. I want to be responsible to myself and other others. At the

beginning of this project, I proposed “haunting” as a way to do it.

Of course, I failed. I failed to explain what “accountability” might mean, or even what I mean when I use it. I failed to articulate what “haunting” might do to make me “accountable,” or even to explain what “haunting” is. I failed to give proper framework for the performance that this text attempted; failed to explain to you that I expected the stories of my family to *act on you*. I failed to articulate how that might happen, why it might be important, what you might gain. I failed to find an explanation for myself, and failed to take responsibility for my own making. I failed spectacularly.

I am hoping that all this failure might make good dense soil for the seeding of new things. The main causes for this failure point the way to new sorts of questions – if not for you, then at least for me. I had very contradictory expectations for this project. I said that it wasn't a project of healing, but I don't think I meant it. I always thought this project might function as a sort of therapy; I hoped that writing through these sites of weight and wonder might help me undo the knots of all the trauma that I did not write about. Funny, that; I knew all along that this wasn't the right place to air the trauma that truly needs (I say begrudgingly) *healing*, but I was hoping that I might somehow “fix” my relationship to my world, to my family, to myself “by accident.”

Of course, there is no “fixing” (and nothing is “broken”), and academic writing isn't therapy. It's dangerous to ask it – to ask yourself – to do something that it cannot, and should not.

I also thought I might be able to build something “useful.” I was hoping to make some sort of theoretical structure - “haunting,” “accountability” - that, once prototyped with my family, might be molded to fit the needs of other folks. I have seen other people do what I think of as Important Academic Work – have read other peoples' groundbreaking theories and essential studies – and hoped I might make some sort of contribution. I would've settled for making a pithy manual. “Dealing with your privilege,” or “Accountable identity 101.”

Of course, all I got was a mirror. A mirror, and something very strange and unexpected. That is; I think I discovered, in writing this, that there was an underlying project, shrouded in ambivalence and discomfort.

I wanted to write about queerness, about madness, about whiteness. I wanted to make peace, make do, make something of myself. I wanted to be accountable to my privilege; I wanted to make myself multiple. And, for some reason, I found myself, again and again, writing about being a Jew.

So this is, after all, a project of recovery. For all of my desires to expose, to eulogize, to contextualize, even to heal (!), I think I was looking for belonging. I was looking for an identity that I could both claim on my own volition, and somehow couldn't deny – for a way to be constantly aware of my privilege, and to recognize my history, and violence and marginality that sidle up right next to all the entitlement, opportunity, benefit, and power, asking “what is to be done?”

So: it is summer, and this is the conclusion. I have come to the “end” of a project that has just begun. I have no idea where it goes from here. I do know that I have felt compelled to use Jewish identity as the framework for all of this writing – somehow even more than I expected, even more than I had set out to – and yet I have still failed to explain what my sense of my Jewish identity is, and why it feels like a return, like belonging. I have failed to explain why it feels like saying “I'm Jewish” in the context of this project, like saying “I'm a PARC worker,” has a sense of relief, like I'm making privilege and history clear all at once. Perhaps that is work for another project, another day.

I think my own self-narrativizing, self-mythologizing, self-aggrandizing and self-defeating impulses are somehow categorically Jewish, and that my wholesale disbelief that anything can be “categorically Jewish” is, itself, categorically Jewish. I think maybe I've spent

this whole time searching for Jewish identity – or, rather, trying to make Jewishness my version of “accountable” identity. I think Jewish identity is haunted. I think Jewish identity is wrestling with history. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe not.

In Tony Kushner's play Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, Joe, the mostly-closeted Mormon Republican, tells an old, old story, full of lust and strife and struggle, to explain his relationship to his identity, his desire. He says,

I had a book of Bible stories when I was a kid. There was a picture I'd look at twenty times every day: Jacob wrestles with the angel. I don't really remember the story, or why the wrestling --just the picture. Jacob is young and very strong. The angel is...a beautiful man, with golden hair and wings, of course. I still dream about it. Many nights. I'm...It's me. In that struggle. Fierce, and unfair. The angel is not human, and it holds nothing back, so how could anyone human win, what kind of a fight is that? It's not just. Losing means your soul thrown down in the dust, your heart torn out from God's. But you can't not lose. (1991, 49-50)

In the Bible, Jacob is wrestling a blessing from The Angel. “I will not let you go until you bless me,” he says. Kushner makes abundant use of this story and its central demand throughout the play. In perhaps its most significant metaphoric moment, to me, anyway, Kushner has his protagonist, Prior Walter, speak a new version of Jacob's to a throng of angels in heaven. Incredibly sick with AIDS-related pneumonia, Prior has climbed a ladder that appeared in his hospital room to a heaven that God has abandoned. Freed from the “prophecy” in his blood (a mandate from the slighted angels to *stop moving*) by wrestling an angel *and winning*, Prior is presented with a choice; stay in heaven in good health, or return to his hospital room on earth. When he makes his choice, the angels look at him in astonishment, admonishment. He says,

Bless me anyway.
I want more life. I can't help myself. I do.
I've lived through such terrible times, and there are people who live through much much worse, but. . . . You see them living anyway.
I don't know if it's not braver to die. But I recognize the habit. The addiction to being alive. We live past hope. If I can find hope anywhere, that's it, that's the best I can do. It's so much not enough, so inadequate but. . . . Bless me anyway. I want more life. (1991, 135)

The metaphor is epic, uncomfortably grandiose. So is the play. So am I. Prone to

hyperbole, I'll take it in stride. I used to use Tony Kushner's version of Jacob wrestling the angel - "I will not let you go until you bless me!" as Joe says it, as Prior says it - to explain my relationship to New York City. I hate it, but I am of it; I never want to go back, but I keep returning. I am asking for its blessing. I will never receive it, but I will keep trying. Hell, I'll probably move back there someday.

But somehow, over the course of this project, I have come to see Jewish identity as a sort of wrestling of the angel. It's the thing I both chose and that chose me; the thing that marks my privilege and the history of marginality; the thing I am so sure of and so ambivalent about; the thing that *isn't* and the only thing that *is*. I am wrestling it, as it is a sort of wrestling.

In thinking about this conclusion, a few weeks ago, I was hoping to create a sort of importable structure for "accountable" white Ashkenazi Jewish identity - a sort of downsized version of my theoretical aspirations for this project. I was hoping to build this model on Tony Kushner - I wanted to argue for him as my super-hero, a semi-secular, certainly crazy, queer, anti-Zionist New York Jew who *is* all of those things. But I cannot even make that manifest. I cannot conclude on a model that feels more like a hunch, like a desire, like a personal choice. It's just not, well, academically sound.

Recognizing that Jewish identity is and will always be left undefined, uncomfortable, provisional, contextual; knowing that it/I can never be transparently accountable to whiteness, privilege and history; given that I'll never feel "authentic," never have "completed" the task of becoming "haunted," or coming to terms with my history; aware that whatever relief I may feel from a sense of belonging will be temporary at best, I say: give it to me anyway. I'll take it.

So there it is. I can only end with a beginning. Not just any beginning, of course, as this has been not just any project - a beginning from the book - The Book - from which a mostly-toxic whole culture emerges (or so they'd like you to think). A beginning from Genesis, of all

places.

Can you believe it? I'm ending all this with The Bible – or, rather, a Bible story as re-told by a queer anti-Zionist New York Jew. It ends with a wrestling match between myself and myself – or, rather, between myself and history. No one is going to win or lose; not now, not ever. It will rage on endlessly *just because*.

And so I say to my Jewish identity, to you, and, mostly, to myself:

“I will not let you go until you bless me.”

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Appendix A

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

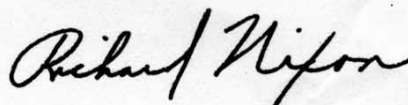
November 22, 1971

Dear Larry:

The war in Vietnam is never far from my thoughts and so I understand the deep longing for peace which you expressed in your letter to me. I want you to know that we are doing everything within our power to obtain a lasting peace -- a peace that will be worthy of the courage and sacrifice of those who have fought, and a peace that will insure that your generation will never have to fight in any war at all.

With my best wishes,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Richard Nixon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "R" and "N".

Larry Treiman
2918 West Fargo
Chicago, Illinois 60645

-1-

Dear Jerry,

Hi! It was great hearing from you. I feel horrible that this didn't get to me sooner it should have a while ago its post-marked Aug. 26 and here it is Sep. 8th. I was afraid that something got lost or delayed. It was great hearing from you. I love you.

I'm glad you got those letters. (But you couldn't have gotten the most recent about note I didn't write it yet as of Aug. 26.) (I would like to call the post-office not to tell them about thing getting lost but about the time they are taking. But I'm afraid they won't let me I have zero freedom.)

Thanks you very much for that wonderful letter and thanks very much for being so nice I really appreciate that. I'm glad you wrote I'm having it took so long.

I'm sorry I can't be positive now I wish I could. I am very depressed now. (Sick, too, but that's besides the point.) The problem is that I have lost every bit of my freedom the staff totally dictate my life 100%. Literally 100% I literally can't even live I have to depend on them even for food and drinks, let alone shampoo, eat, eat. And I have no freedom. Zero I used to at least have some. But now they have me totally locked away they have broken off my communication with the outside world. I think that now they have no just of course killed me while I am here but I think they may have already put me in obscurity forever. (I'll get a different pen, have find one in down can't get out.) (This is a different pen.) I am very spaced out having dumb rambling. I have kept saying bullshit for them. (I'm back to the other pen.)

I really appreciate that letter. I am sorry I can't be positive

-2-

school. I've learned the hard way that anything but that ^{would} be ~~being~~ to myself.

I'm sorry I can't talk positive, I wish I could. There are positive things after the school. But to hear the agency of the school I go into oblivion and I can't get out of it.

The school has pounded it into my head that I'm a bit. What I need is to toughen up, but I can't get ~~it~~ it that I have to be totally at their saucer and bullshit for them and bias them out. They force me to do this.

Terr, you wrote me a great letter I am sorry this is so disorganized. ~~It~~ (I've got another pen now.) It was great to see that I got a letter from you when I came up to the dorm. I was and was very depressed and desperate (also a migraine headache.) I don't know what I would've done if I didn't get a letter from you. You a good person hope you get that chance to write a full length featured article for the Trib next month! (Or this month.)

I'm sorry lately I've had trouble thinking straight. I'm afraid that the school might have ruined me forever. I don't think it's good what the schools doing not just that it's tacher, but it's very bad for the person all their life. It makes them be very weak feel very embarrassed that they exist. And it makes them go into oblivion. Be totally quietly detached and accepting and never able to enjoy anything or do anything for themselves. It's not good that they make me completely dependent. It's not good that they cut me off from the world. And even from relationships.

I'm very sorry that I can't be positive. But I can't there's nothing left to me. This person's life was meant.

By the way I've had a migraine headache (and have one now).

-4-

~~history~~ But I can't talk period. If I say something, nide it none of my business. I can't talk at all either I don't get away with it. Anything I say. They will ask the other person what I said so I can't talk. The only way I can talk and I must do this. I to say the bullshit that they want to hear, constantly sticks up for them treat people like shit for them, tell them how great they are and contrabandly repeat back all the bull shit they say about me including all the degrading things, etc.

People come in here alive but with problems, people come out of here dead.

I'd been trying to be positive for awhile. But recently all my distrust, suspicion, about the school has been proven true. All my hope place. So I have zero hope about this place. I am glad any time they let up a little but I know that any moment they will go back. They don't dare be themselves for a second in front of me. (And I don't dare be myself for a second in front of them. But we aren't ourselves in different ways. They act as though in the creepiest, dumbest, wildest, most embarrassing way of acting in the universe. Constantly dictate. They also don't say anything but orders and official stuff bullshit.)

There is positive, but if I want to find it the school is not the place to look.

They've taken away all my freedoms, one by one, the last of which might've been calling JPL or Plutonium to get into on Viking and going up front. Now they'll let me do it again they'll keep letting and then not letting me for awhile. Maybe they'll stop requisitioning that freedom for good but

Dad,

Happy 71st Birthday!

Today, tomorrow, and always...

May the good
things be yours!

Happy Birthday

Try to enjoy things! You
can't beat the 2nd law of
thermodynamics. Nevertheless,
if you relax & enjoy the
things you have you'll
be happier. There is even
evidence that such an attitude
may improve health, but don't expect that
Sincerely, Larry

1. DOES THE EXISTENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS MEAN THAT QUANTUM
2.
3. MECHANICS SHOULD BE EXTENDED?
4.

5. IN HIS BOOK, "PHYSICS AND BEYOND", WERNER HEISENBERG PRESENTS
6.
7. AN ARGUMENT FOR AN EXTENSION OF QUANTUM THEORY. HE CLAIMS THAT
8.
9. BECAUSE HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS EXISTS QUANTUM MECHANICS SHOULD BE
10.
11. EXTENDED. IN STANDARD FORM HEISENBERG'S ARGUMENT IS:
12.

13. 1. CONSCIOUSNESS DOES NOT OCCUR IN PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY.
14.
15. 2. QUANTUM MECHANICS CANNOT DESCRIBE THE PHENOMENA OF
16. HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS.
17.
18. 3. CONSCIOUSNESS IS DESCRIBED BY BIOLOGY.
19.

20. -----
21. ..QUANTUM MECHANICS MUST BE EXTENDED.
22.

23. IT IS CLEAR THAT HEISENBERG'S ARGUMENT IS NOT VALID. NEVERTHE-
24.
25. LESS IT CONTAINS THE NECESSARY IMPLICIT PREMISES TO MAKE IT VALID. IF
26.
27. I ADD THESE PREMISES AND PUT THE ARGUMENT INTO STANDARD FORM IT CAN
28.
29. BE STATED LIKE THIS:
30.

31. 1. PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY USE QUANTUM MECHANICS.
32.
33. 2. QUANTUM MECHANICS CANNOT DESCRIBE THE PHENOMENA OF
34. HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS.
35.
36. 3. BIOLOGY USES PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY.
37.
38. 4. CONSCIOUSNESS IS DESCRIBED BY BIOLOGY.
39.
40. 5. IF A THEORY (SUCH AS QUANTUM MECHANICS) CANNOT
41. DESCRIBE ALL PHENOMENA DESCRIBED BY A SCIENCE WHICH
42. USES IT, THEN THAT THEORY MUST BE EXTENDED.
43.

44. -----
45. ..QUANTUM MECHANICS MUST BE EXTENDED.
46.

47. WHILE IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT QUANTUM MECHANICS SHOULD BE
48.
49. EXTENDED FOR REASONS OTHER THAN THE EXISTENCE OF HUMAN CONSCIOUS-
50.
51. NESS I WILL LIMIT THIS PAPER TO WHETHER HEISENBERG'S ARGUMENT
52.
53. GIVES US GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING ITS THESIS.
54.

55. IN THE ANALYSIS OF THIS ARGUMENT GIVEN BY BOHR HE CASTS
56.
57. DOUBT ON PREMISE 5. ACCORDING TO BOHR IT IS POSSIBLE THAT, THOUGH
58.
59. BIOLOGY USES PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY, THERE ARE PARTS OF BIOLOGY
60.

WHICH CANNOT BE DESCRIBED BY EITHER PHYSICS OR CHEMISTRY. HE
 ASSERTS THAT THERE IS A "CONCEPT OF COMPLEMENTARITY." BY THIS
 HE MEANS IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A THEORY CAN BE APPLIED TO CERTAIN
 AREAS OF A GIVEN FIELD BUT IT CANNOT BE APPLIED TO OTHER AREAS OF
 THAT FIELD.

WHILE BOHR'S CRITICISM MAY BE WORTHY OF SOME MERIT, THERE IS
 A MUCH MORE DOUBTFUL PREMISE. PREMISE 2 IS AN ASSERTION BASED ON
 THE FACT THAT NO CONNECTION BETWEEN QUANTUM MECHANICS AND HUMAN
 CONSCIOUSNESS HAS YET BEEN DETERMINED. THERE ARE NUMEROUS EXAMPLES
 OF PHENOMENA WHICH AT FIRST APPEARED NOT TO BE EXPLAINABLE BY A GIVEN
 THEORY WHICH WERE LATER SHOWN TO BE A LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE OF THAT
 THEORY. ONE SUCH EXAMPLE IS THAT OF BROWNIAN MOTION. THIS IS THE
 SEEMINGLY RANDOM MOTION OF A DUST PARTICLE IN A LIQUID OF LOWER
 DENSITY THAN THE PARTICLE. IT WAS ORIGINALLY THOUGHT THAT SUCH
 MOTION WAS CONTRARY TO THAT PREDICTED BY NEWTON'S LAWS OF MOTION.
 IT WAS LATER DISCOVERED BY EINSTEIN THAT IF SUCH A PARTICLE WERE
 TO BE COMPOSED OF ATOMS AND THUS WAS TO BE CONSIDERED AS A SYSTEM
 OF PARTICLES, THEN THE MOTION OF SUCH A PARTICLE WOULD BE A LOGICAL
 RESULT OF NEWTON'S LAWS.

THE MORE COMPLICATED A GIVEN PHENOMENA IS THE LONGER IT
 TAKES TO ESTABLISH THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT PHENOMENA AND
 A THEORY. THE HUMAN BRAIN IS COMPLICATED. IT CONSISTS OF SEVERAL
 BILLION SPECIALIZED NEURONS. EACH NEURON CONSISTS OF MANY MOLECULES.
 EACH MOLECULE CONSISTS OF SEVERAL ATOMS. EACH ATOM CONSISTS OF
 PROTONS, NEUTRONS AND ELECTRONS. PROTONS AND NEUTRONS (ARE BELIEVED)
 TO CONSIST OF QUARKS. THUS IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THAT ANY RELATION-
 SHIP BETWEEN QUANTUM THEORY AND CONSCIOUSNESS WILL TAKE TIME TO BE
 RECOGNIZED.

THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT QUANTUM MECHANICS SHOULD BE EXTENDED.